* NEW LIGHT ON RANIGUMPHA — **IT'S A THEATRE**
* NEW LIGHT ON NATYASASTRA (Chapter II)
* KHANDAGIRI / UDAYAGIRI — a Theatre-complex

CATARA

JATHARA

JATRA-THE THEATRE

DHIREN DASH

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Dedicated in memory
of
my father
Late Bhagirathi Dash
poet, dramatist, teacher, philanthropist.
A friend, philosopher and guide
to
everybody.

BLESSINGS

Mr. Dhiren Dash happened to be one of my important students, and I am happy to learn from him and from this book the research work which he has done in establishing the old traditional theatre of Bharatacharya, in Rani Gumpha of Udayagiri hills. May God bless him and inspire him for greater achievements in future in this direction.

Baroda
29th. Nov' 1976

C. C. Mehta

PREFACE

The rock-cut caves of Khandagiri and Udayagiri on the out-skirts of Bhubaneswar, form an important land mark, in the rich mosaic of Orissa's glorious past. Dating back to the second century B.C., these caves were primarily meant as shelter houses for the Jaina ascetics. An interesting disclosure was, however, made by Shri Dhiren Dash, an eminent author on dramaturgy, during the Cultural Convention of Eastern States of India recently held at Bhubaneswar that the Ranigumpha cave was an ancient medium rectangular theatre designed strictly in accordance with the specifications laid down in the Natyasastra of Bharat Muni. This pronouncement of Shri Dash borders on an important discovery of the age It is now for the historians to scan the thesis and consider its acceptance. If proved, it will be the only existing ancient theatre in India today built according to the prescriptions of Bharat Muni's Natyasastra.

In the Cultural Convention of the Eastern States held at Bhubaneswar, a scholar from West Bengal made out a point that the total number of ancient monuments existing in Orissa to-day was equal to or even more than the total number of monuments found in the country. The second important finding of this Convention came from Shri Dhiren Dash who proved by copious references from ancient texts that Ranigumpha was not a shelter house for monks but was an ancient theatre and is the one of its kind existing in India to-day. This discovery of Shri Dash has brought to light yet another glorious aspect of Orissa's rich cultural heritage.

Bhubaneswar
9th. Aug' 1976

A. N. Tiwari, I. A. S
Secretary & Director
Tourism and Cultural Affairs
Govt. of Orissa.

INTRODUCTION

Shri Dhiren Dash is a tireless worker in the field of performing arts. His special interest is the folk theatre of Orissa. He has a great perseverance. He has been trying to unearth the traditional treasures in the field of performing arts in our country which are lying hidden through negligence. He is responsible for re-vitalising the traditional form of Jatra in Orissa in the capacity of not only a researcher but also as a director and actor.

Theatre in general and folk theatre in particular in all its aspects have been a subject of his study for a number of years. In this little monograph, he has made an effort to prove that Rani Gumpha which was being taken to be a monastery by people and scholars alike was in fact a Theatre. He has supported his thesis with evidence from Bharata Natya Shastra. This in my opinion is an important discovery. I would like the scholars of Indian Archaeology and researchers in the field of ancient Indian theatre to go into the findings of Shri Dhiren Dash with an open mind and if necessary do a little re-thinking on the conclusions which he has drawn.

As one who is interested in theatre, I must express my gratefulness to Shri Dhirenbabu for his efforts.

1, Roopali,
POONA-4
28th. Jan' 1977

P. L. Deshpande

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Natyasastra of Bharata Muni, the most ancient treatise on Indian dramaturgy has devoted one complete chapter (the second chapter) for the construction of a play house. This chapter, besides giving details of decorations, propitiatory ceremonies and the different types of theatre designs, clearly prescribes their specifications i.e. dimensions, number of pillars, height of the plinth etc, for all sections of the playhouse.

Shri Manmohan Ghosh, who has translated the Natyasastra into English, in his introductions (page ii.), under caption 'The Playhouse or the Theatre' states, "The N. S. describes various types of playhouse, and their different parts have been mentioned to some extent in detail. *But in the absence of evidence the like of which has been copiously available in case of the Greek theatre, it can not be said how far the ancient Indian plays were performed in specially constructed theatres*" etc. Again he wites in the notes on page II, 10," Except the cave (C. 200 B. C) in Ramgarh hill suspected by Bloch to have been the remains of a theatre, *there is no other evidence of the existence of a playhouse in ancient India,*" *etc.*

Mr. A. B. Keith in the book' The Sankrit Drama,' writes in page 358 :

" .. .. But we have from second century B. C., the remains of a cave which seems to have been used, if not for the performance of plays, at any rate for the purpose of recitation of poems or some similar end. It is found in the Ramgarh hills in Chota Nagpur and *although it is quite impossible to prove that it had anything to do with plays*" *etc.*

Dr. C. B. Gupta in his book 'The Indian Theatre' writes (Chapter XII, Epilogue, page 178)

" .... all support the view that theatres were of a permanent nature, *but as we do not find an archaeological evidence of a permanent theatre, we can not be definite about this*" etc,

Likewise all experts on Indian dramaturgy, through-out times, have tried to give a picture of the designs of the classical Indian theatres from their own interpretations because of the *so-called established idea that there is no existing specimen of the ancient Indian theatre available any where in the country.*

In the friezes over some of the caves of Khandagiri and Udayagiri of Bhubaneswar many historians decipher the representations of mass entertainment but except Mr. Charles Fabri, who once suggested the double-storeyed Ranigumpha supposod to have been a semi-formal theatre, it has always been accepted by one and all as a monastery in Jain and Buddhist times.

× × ×

I am interested in theatre and theatre arts from my early childhood but until 1959/60 when I was a student of the Bombay Natya Academy, I was not very much conscious about the theatres described in the Natyasastra. It was from the lectures on eastern theatre from my Guru, Prof. C. C. Mehta (who used to come to Bombay from Baroda to teach us), I came to be interested in the classical Indian theatre. The description of the "double storeyed mountain cavern like" flashed in my mind and I recollected the Ranigumpha of Udayagiri hills of Bhubaneswar at once on which on several occasions, in the past I had danced, jumped, recited and acted spontaneously while on sight-seeing excursions during my school and college days, out of queer curiosity at the topography of the site.

Back in Orissa, I had pursued my keen interest in it and the result is what is in your hand now.

× × ×

I am neither proficient in Sanskrit nor Prakrut or Pali languages. Similarly I am not a historian also. Hence in trying to interprete the concerned words from the Hatigumpha inscriptions or to understand a chapter from the Natyasastra, I have always referred to the translations and commentaries written on these texts in Hindi, English or Oriya by different personalities. Most of the English translations of the Sanskrit Ślokas of Natyasastra I have quoted in this book are either from the translations from Shri Manmohan Ghosh or from Shri Banambar Acnarya. Where-ever I have differed, I have made a mention.

× × ×

It is heartening to find that in India, more and more institutes of learning are coming up for music, dance and drama turning out many students every year. But it is equally surprising to find that while the institutions on dance as well as music are teaching Indian classical arts, the institutions on dramatics are stressing more on the so-called modern theatre which is nothing but an imitation of the western theatre. Being a theatre-man I have attempted to convey my line of thinking on the subject and I will surely feel happy if my book provides some food for thought to those who think of Indian theatre at large, in our country or abroad.

× × ×

I gratefully acknowledge the blessings from my teacher Prof. C. C. Mehta from Baroda.

I am very much grateful to Shri A. N. Tiwari, I. A. S. for encouraging me in my endeavours from time to time and being kind enough to write the preface of this book.

I am also very much grateful to Shri P. L. Despande who was kind enough to write the introduction for my work.

I am obliged to the Director, Cultural Affairs, Orissa for granting me a subsidy towards this publication.

I am indebted to Shri Mayadhar Panda for the architectural and other drawings, to Sri Durga Charan Panda for the illustrations and photographs, to Sri Natabar Das for photographs, to Shri Dinanath Pathy for the cover design, to Shri Golak Prasad Singh, Shri Nagbhusan Pattanaik, Shri Bhagaban Panda for helping me in the proof reading.

I am very much thankful to Sri Jagadish Pani and all his colleagues of Kwality Press who have taken special care to bring-out this publication in the best possible manner.

My thanks are due to all my friends but for whose advices, encouragements and assistance even this small work of mine would not have seen the light of the day.

And lastly I thank my dear readers to bear with me the deeds of the devil.

JAI HIND

Dhiren Dash

CONTENTS

List of Photographs

List of Illustrations

ANCIENT *Kalinga* was great in every sphere of art and culture. It is history.

The greatness was at its zenith during the reigns of *Kalingadhipati Maha Megha-vahana Aira Sri Kharavela*, two centuries before Christ.

The supreme conqueror was not only one of the greatest connoisseur of art and culture but was also an exponent of all the *'Gandharba Vidyas'*, himself. He had realised that in order to boost up the morale of the doomed populace of a great nation, like the then *Kalinga*, all efforts for all round development in the field of histrionic culture was also badly essential. With this conviction, he held *Nata*, *Gita*, *Badita*, *Usaba*, and *Samaja* regularly. He built up *Catara* or *Jathara* every where in his kingdom

One huge, *Catara* or *Jathara* (the main State Theatre ?) which he built with 50 pillars bedecked with pearls, precious stones and jewels has already been lost into the oblivion through the passage of ages. But *Kharavela* was not an ordinary person. He knew the immense loss the nature can bring during the course of time, by annihilating every trace of the existence of men and materials. He could foresee every thing lost. And so, he left his documentary evidences engraved on the rocks, which he felt would remain at least for a few millenniums before being wiped-off by weather.



Hatigumpha Inscriptions

And so, beside the multisized caves of *Khandagiri* and *Udayagiri* at Bhubaneswar, Orissa, we have the inscriptions of *Kharavela* in front of the *Hati Gumpha*, which after over two thousand years, give us the glimpses of the glory that was *Kalinga*.

In its fifth line the inscription reads :—

***Gandhava Veda-Budho-Dapa-Nata-Gita-Vadita-Sandasanahi**

Usava-Samaja-Karapanahi cha kidapayati nagarim'

This means 'Expert in *Gandharva Veda* or in all histrionic arts himself, *Kharavela*, arranged for the entertainment of his citizens, items such as *Dapa* (Combats), *Nata* (Dance), *Gita* (Music), *Vadita* (Orchestra), *Usaba* (Festival) and *Samaja* (Plays).

Incidentally all these words in Prakrut of this sentence are still phonetically similar to the words in vogue in the modern Oriya language. The *Samaja* stands for the plays in *Jatra* of Orissa as it was and still is, in use throughout the Oriya speaking areas since time immemorial.

In its 13th line the inscription reads :—

†Vithi-catara (or Jathara) Palikhani-Gopurani-
Siharani Nibesayati.........' etc.

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* गन्धव-वेद-बुधो दपनतगीतवादित संदसनाहि
उसव-समाज-कारापनाहि च कीड़ापयति नगरिं ॥

† वीथी-चतर-पलिखानि-गोपुराणि-सिहराणि
निवेसयति.........

This means that *Kharavela* built in his kingdom *Vithi* (Roads), *Catara* or *Jathara* (Theatres ?) *Palikhani* (Channels), G*opurani* (Gates) and *Siharani* (Temples) etc.

We are mainly concerned with the second word in the above sentence. The language of the inscription is Prakrut and is very close to Pali and is written in Brahmi script. Some experts have deciphered this word to read *Catara* and there are others who have deciphered it to read *Jathara*. Inspite of this difference of opinion as to how the word will be pronounced the meanings given by these experts to this term has affinity to each other.

Now let us take the word *Jathara.*

The Sanskrit lexicon, beside giving many other meanings of this word mentions that the word stands for CAVITY or INTERIOR OF ANYTHING. And so, these experts who have read it thus, have given us the meaning to be 'EXCELLENT TOWERS WITH CARVED INTERIORS'. After all, a theatre is invariably like the excellent towers with carved interior'. Hence *Jathara* is THEATRE.

Now, let us consider the other word *Catara*.

'*Catara'* stands for a circular or square plot of level ground or a 'court yard sorrounded by wall or houses, or the *Choutara'*.

'*Choutara*' means a raised square platform with open space around it. In different dialects of India it is known as '*Chabutara'* or '*Chibutra'* also.

These *Choutaras* are very common every where since the inception of civilisation.

It has always been a MUST in community life. Meetings, *Kirtans*, *Bhajanas*, Marriage and Thread ceremonies, Yajnas, all types of religious and social functions need a *Chautara*. For every show business we depend on a *Chautara*, the built in raised platform with open space all around it. In Orissa, almost all types of histrionic performances of Jatra i. e. *Leela*, *Suanga*, *Pala*, *Daskathia*, *Gotipua*, *Sakhinata*, *Ghuduki*, *(or Dhuduki) Nata* and the like shows, need a '*Choutara'* for their presentation. In absence of a suitable built-in '*Choutara'* a raised improvised platform is made out of wooden planks or bed cots known as '*Manchaa'* and the performances take place over it, sorrounded by spectators on all sides.

A '*Choutara*' is raised so that all that goes on, on it are seen to a distance. It helps the angle of sight line for all people sitting around it. In case of slope or gallery around, a raised middle may not be needed and only the plain level ground will also do.

It is no wonder and is absolutely a fact that this '*Choutara*' has remained a true people's theatre in our country since time immemorial—daringly intimate and most democratic in it's design, the principles of which had perhaps evolved since the beginning of the first human society on earth out of sheer necessities.

Do we have any evidence of *Kharavela's Choutara*, I mean the square platform with open space at it's sides ? There is the remnant of at least one, a small one dilapidated and rearranged, located in front of the Ananta cave built by *Kharavela*, which is supposed to be oldest and the best preserved cave amongst the *Khandagiri* caves.

There we see a raised platform with open space around. Though the topography has changed, the remnants of an ancient small '*Catara*' on the top of a hill and the space on the slope side bound by stone wall, gives us an idea about the structure.



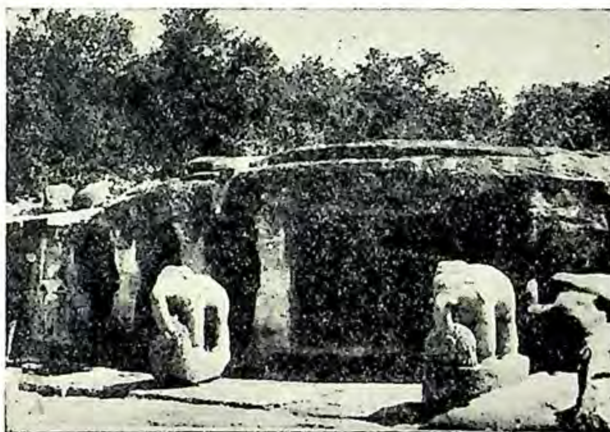
ANANTA CAVE of Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.
(A raised platform with open space around in front of the cave)

Two other caves, the *Tatva Gumpha* No, 1 and the *Tatva Gumpha* No. 2 successively at lower heights with open space in front of them without the raised central platform indicates that a series of three *Cataras* at different levels were built there.



TATVA GUMPHA No. 1 & 2 of Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar, Orissa

Similarly the *Ganesh Gumpha* in *Udayagiri* has a huge open court yard in front of it.



"GANESH GUMPHA" at Udayagiri, Bhubaneswar.

What are those spots ? What are these structures so similar to each other in their constructions ? Why are the open spaces like court yards located near these structures ? Are these not *Cataras* or *Jatharas* or places earmarked for *Jatras*. And the structures, I mean the caves you see in the pictures consisting of rooms, verandahs, benches, pillars and all, are nothing but places of 'NO ADMISSION' during the functions. These are the so called green rooms of the modern theatre where artists do their make up or retire.

Even to-day in Orissa and everywhere in our country, we find that *Choutaras* are very much in use. *Choutaras* of various sizes are located everywhere, whether in urban or rural areas with sufficient space around, an item of absolute necessity for the society living. It is the people's theatre in the true sense of the term. It is the space of Jatra.

Since this *Catara* or *Jathara* is found to be a most common thing and the type of *Catara* or *Jathara* we are very much accustomed to, at present, donot need big planning nor budgeting to finance it, for its construction, how does this item turned to be an item of so much importance that in those days, His Majesty the King, Kharavela, felt the necessity of having it built every where in his kingdom, so much so that he felt the absolute necessity of including this item *Jathara* or *Catara* more than once in his few lines of rock cut inscription, which gives details of only his main achievements amongst many ?

These *Catara* or *Jathara* would therefore definitely not be the common and the low cost mere *Choutaras* of today. These, by all means were regular theatre halls, worthy to have been constructed by an Emperor, who heartily had realised that "theatres are the show places of a nation".

The *Prakrut* expression *Catara* or *Jathara*, stands for the Sanskrit term Chatvara and the lexicon clearly gives us the direct meaning of this word to be a stage, an amphitheatre, an arena etc. amongst many others.

Incidentally both expressions of the same word *Catara* and *Jathara* are directly and very closely inter-related in its meaning, in it's interpretation, as well as in it's pronounciation to a most commonly used one word, *Jatra* in Oriya to mean the theatre.

The difference in the pronounciation is JA instead of CA and the THA instead of TA and vice versa. Both JA and CA belong to the same CA class of consonants of the Indian vocabulary.

As in to-day's common use *Jatra* takes place on a *Choutara* or in other words a *Jatra* cannot take place or presented, without a *Choutara*.

Since all other words in the same sentence, in the 13th line of Kharavela's *Hatigumpha* inscriptions relate to what he built or constructed in his kingdom, this word *Catara* or *Jathara* or Jatra therefore, also directly related to a particular type of construction, construction of a place where performing arts could be presented with ease for a gathering. It is therefore the distinguished theatres, which he built for the entertainment of his subjects, both hypaethral and the roofed ones.

At all times, *Jatra* relates to the place and sphere of theatrical performances. The theatrical groups in Orissa are always known to be the *Jatra Dala* or *Jatra Mandali* or the *Jatra Walas*. This *Jatra Dala* presents the *Jatra* or theatre. In absence of permanent pendals earmarked for regular theatrical presentations, the *Jatra Dalas* of today in Orissa have turned peripatetic. These groups move from place to place and accommodate themselves to present their *Jatra* shows at all assorted available conditions. The *Jatra* groups individually specialise in their repertory according to their choice i. e. *Leela, Suanga, Pala, Daskathia, Ghudukinata, Rasa, Prahlada Nataka, Desia Nata, Sakhinata etc.*

Tropical climate, lack of proper patronisation, age-long foreign dominations, low economic condition, inflow of outside influence, hatred of the so called sophisticated, all combindly helped the indigenous *Jatra* not to prosper. It is because of this that *Jatra* has invariably turned to be rural and open air and the *Jatrawalas* always a wait until fairweather.

As I have already stated, there is the repetation of the word Catara in Kharavela's inscription. While just the plain word *Catara* is in the 13th line, an adjective has been prefixed to it in the 16th line, thus making the combined word Patalika Catara.

The 15th and 16th line read thus :

From the 15th line : *

"Arahata-nisidiya samipe patbhare cha varakara samuthapitahi anekajojanahitahi panatisahi satasahasahi silahi silathambhani cha chetiyani cha karapayati"

* अरहन्त निसीदिया समीपे पाभारे च वराकार समुथापिताहि अनेक योजनाहिताहि पनतिसाहि सतसहसाहि सिलाहि सिलथम्भानि च चेतियनि च कारापयति

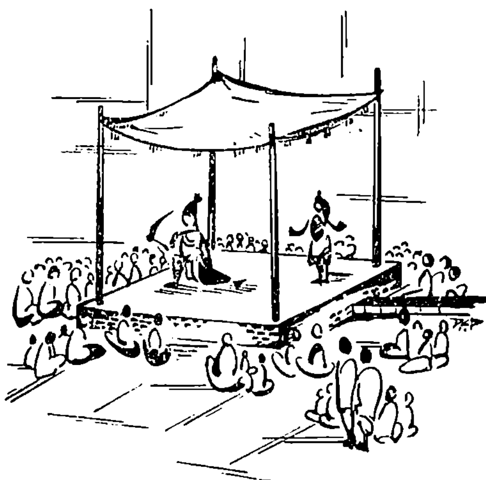
The 16th line : †

"Patalika catare cha bedariya gabhe thambhe patitthapayati panatariya sata sahasahi. Bedariya neela bochhinnan checha jatthi adhasatikan tiryan upadayati"

This means that near the slope of the mountains he [Khāravela] built up a huge *Patalika Catara* [a *Catara* with canopy or roof] having 50 stone pillars bedecked with precious stones at the cost of rupees 75 lakhs and 35000 pieces of stone slabs collected from the best quarries around.

Now this leads us to reflect on the conception of *Patalika Catara.*

Normally, *Choutaras* of today are open-sky, square platforms having an open space around.



Choutara with canopy

During functions or performances, four poles are put at four corners and a canopy is tied over head. More poles are needed only when the open space around the *Choutara* is to be covered with canopy.

This is of course temporary improvisation.

A permanent pendal needs permanent structures.

While four pillars are sufficient to put on a canopy at the top of the central platform more pillars are put up to hold the entire roof of the auditorium all around the platform. And this *Patalika Catara* had fifty pillars.

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† पटलिक चतरे च वेड़रिय-गभे-थम्भे पतिठापयति पानतरीय सत सहसेहि [॥]
वेडुरियं नीलवोच्छिन्न च चेयठि अधसतिकं तिरियं उपादयति [॥]

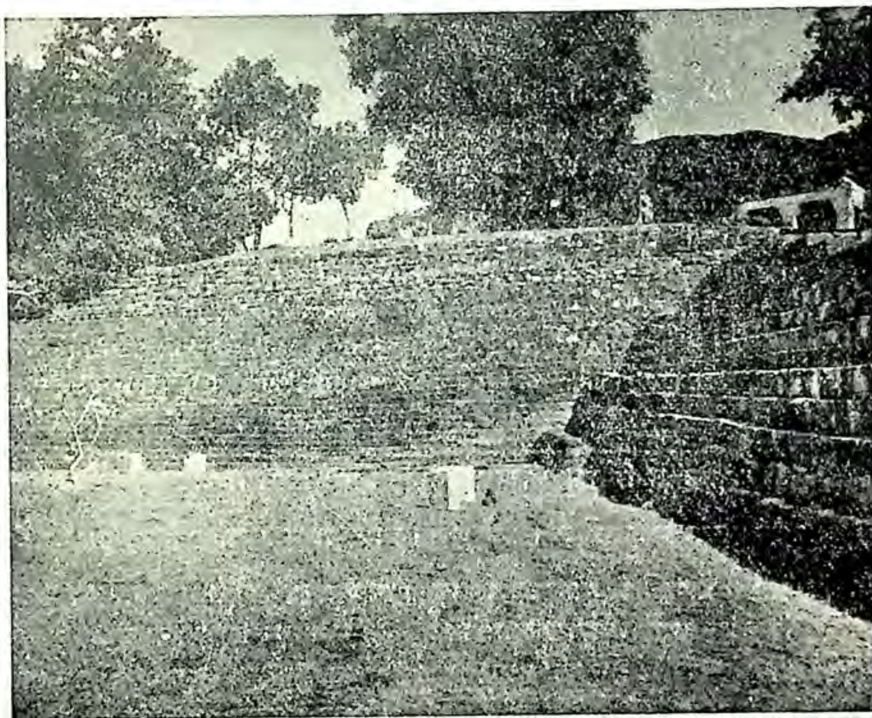
And hence, Kharavela's *Patalika Catara* was nothing but his huge permanent State Theatre meant for a huge crowd where according to Kharavela's own inscriptions *Naia, Gita, Vadita, Usava* and *Samaja* were held regularly for the entertainment of his subjects

And this theatre was built to be the most democratic in its design i. e the stage or the acting or performing area was in the centre with spectators around ,befitting the large heartedness of His Majesty the King Kharavela, its conceptor, and the immense varieties of its utilities.

During the passage of these thousands of years this main state theatre is now lost but I vouch safe that slight traces of the remnants are still there to prove beyond doubt that some unique structure was there long long ago.

The huge open space between the two hills Khandagiri and Udayagiri is the exact spot where Kharavela's *Patalika Catara* was located. During these thousands of years, the huge roof and the pillars have crumbled down and the stones have been carried away by men not knowing what it was or the importance of it.

Similarly the debris must have been bull-graded, cleared and cut, to allow the new pucca road to pass towards the Chandaka area from Bhubaneswar.



Still preserved section of a levelled open space with a section of
a stone-lined gallery-like structure
—Site for PATALIKA CATARA

With whatever is left over for us to look bewildered and awe-inspired is the still preserved section of a levelled open space with a section of a stone lined gallery-like structure. This was octagonal in shape all around with plane surface in the centre. The present condition of the existing structure gives us the first impression that the structure is there to stop erosion of the hill which is also correct But the topography & the location of the premises, the surfaces of the nearby caves, caves around and atop convinces that some unique structure was there juxtaposed between the slopes of both the hills, the Khandagiri and the Udayagiri.

The present making of the huge ramp approach to the Hatigumpha though does not seem to be antique, the foundation over which the present ramp has been made seems to be of very queer type of engineering. The sides of the ramp gives a step like uneven ascent in stages and bound by admixture of patterns.

On the western side of the ramp, there is a gallery like pattern. It is true that ever since this place was discovered to be of some historical importance, utmost care is being taken to preserve it as far as possible in it's original shape. Things which are considered to be of no importance have been undergoing treatments which are considered to be the best as and when from time to time.

This was the place where the *Patalika Catara* was built by Kharavela. While the whole thing was the *Patalika Catara* the actual *Catara* was the area with or without the central platform and the *Patala* or the roof was high up above resting on 50 pillars.

And the capacity of this *Patalika Catara* or the Top covered theatre was for at least 20,000 spectators, if not more sitting all around.

× × × ×

How do the words sound the *Catara* (*Chatwara* or *Choutara* etc.) or *Jathara* (*Jatara* or *Jatra* etc.) and the Theatre ?

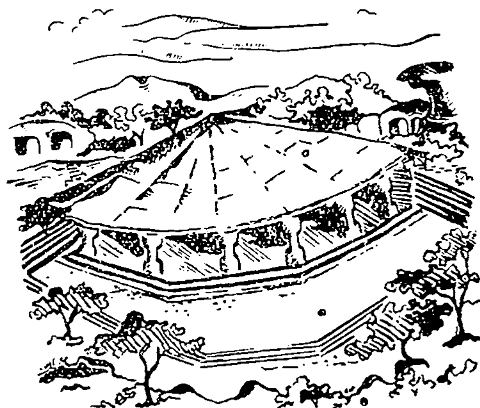
How, the exact equivalent terms of the word 'theatre' are pronounced in other languages of the world ?

It is very interesting to note that there is a close phonetical affinity between all these words, *Catara, Jathara*, *Jatra* and Theatre.

For all practical purposes, these terms carry the same meaning and serve the same functions i. e. an acting area plus an auditorium where performing arts can be presented with ease, to some spectators.

× × × ×

And in the case of *Patalika Catara* of Kharavela we visualize that it was a fully developed permanent mass theatre with acting area in the centre and spectators around.



An artist's impression of the PATALIKA CATARA

But Kharavela did not stop there. In his efforts of practically doing solid things for lasting effects, he had gone a step further.

The *Patalika Catara* was the huge State Theatre for grand spectacles for the masses and so, what about the classes ?

Although I do not think there was any such distinct and wide difference between the masses and classes as developed in later times and we know Kharavela's life was a life of complete dedication to his people.

But, the king must also have his personal court entertainers to entertain him, his family, his officials, his state guests. So he should have a close intimate theatre for this purpose, worthy of a monarch.

An exponent of all arts (including the histrionic arts himself,) Kharavela would not have left things in a mere manner. And so, within the precinct of the double storied *Rani Gumpha* caves he had left another *Catara* or *Jathara*, of course with a little difference from the others, cut out of the solid rocks of Udayagiri and fortunately it is still there for every body to see and stamp on it.

What is it if not a regular cave theatre, where *Nata*, *Gita*, *Vadita*, *Usava* and *Samaja* were being performed and the same can be presented with ease even to-day ?

This *Rani Gumpha* or sometimes very fondly called the *Ranihamsapur* or *Raninaur*, (the queen's palace) is for the layman, a series of rock cut caves. For all historians it has always been a huge monastery meant for *Arhatas*, *Sramanas*, *Brahmanas*, *Jatis*, *Tapasas* and *Rishis*. But the grandeur of the pattern, the beautiful and luxurious design of the structure, carvings of amorous figures prove beyond doubt that this *Ranigumpha* was not for heretics at all. For me and from now on for all, it is going to be identified for all times to come, what exactly it is, for which it was built by King Kharavela.

It is a Play House or a Theatre.

In Sanskrit it is a *Natya Mandap*, *Prekshya Gruha*, or *Prekshyaveshma*, complete in every sense of the term

Strangely enough (Strange because we had never thought of it) this *Prekshya Gruha* fits in to the prescribed dimensions and conditions of *Natya Sastra* of *Bharatmuni* in minutest details, as given in Chapter two, *Prekshya Gruha Laxsmanam*.

Let us see how ?

× × × × ×



RANI GUMPHA AT UDAYAGIRI, BHUBANESWAR, IT IS A THEATRE

"Prekshya Gruha Laxsmanam" of rectangular type of Playhouse :

(1) *Natya Sastra* of *Bharata Muni* states in *sloka* 7 and 8 of Chapter two. thus,

"There are three types of play houses devised by the wise *Visvakarma* (the heavenly architect) in the treatise on his art. (*Sastra*) They are rectangular (*Vikrsta*), square (*Caturasra*) and triangular (*Tryasra*) Their sizes vary : they may be large (*Jyestha*), middle (*Madhya*) and small (*Avara*).

● **The Rani Gumpha is of the Rectangular (Vikrsta) type and it is of the middle size (Madhyama)**

(2) "In *sloka* 9 and 10 it reads :

"The length of these fixed in terms of cubits as well as *Dandas* is, one hundred and eight, sixty four and thirty two for *Jyestha*, *Madhyama* and *Avara* respectively"

● **The length of Rani Gumpha theatre is 64 cubits only as prescribed for 'Madhyama'**

In *slokas* 12 to 16, *Natyasastra* gives us a detailed table of measurement prevailing then.

I am not going into its details. We are concerned only with it's overall standards. We will be involved only with two terms, *Danda* and *Hasta*.

One *Danda* =four *Hastas* [or four cubits] One *Hasta* or one cubit= Eighteen inches [The accepted standard for one cubit is 18", but actually this varies from 18" to 22"].

● The acting areas plus the auditorium in the Ranigumpha theatre measures 64 cubits or 96 feet.

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1 इह प्रेक्षागृहाणांतु धीमता विश्वकर्मणा । त्रिविधः सन्निवेशश्च शास्त्रतः परिकल्पितः ॥७॥
विकृष्टश्चतुरस्रश्च त्र्यस्रश्चैव हि मण्डपः । तेषां त्रीणि प्रमाणानि ज्येष्ठं मध्यं तथाऽवरम् ॥८॥

2 प्रमाणमेषां निर्दिष्टं हस्तदण्डसमाश्रयम् । शतं चाष्टौ चतुःषष्टिर्द्वात्रिंशश्चेति निश्चितः ॥९॥
अष्टाधिकं शतं ज्येष्ठं चतुःषष्टिस्तु मध्यमम् । कनीयस्तु तथा वेश्म हस्ता द्वात्रिंशदिष्यते ॥१०॥

(3) Sloka 11 reads :

"The large playhouse is meant for Gods and the middle sized one for kings, while for the rest of people has been prescribed the smallest.

- **The Rani Gumpha Theatre is middle sized and hence for kings. King was Arya Maharaja Mahameghavahana Kalingadhipati Sri Kharavela.**

(4) Sloka 17 reads :

"A play house meant for mortals should be made sixty four cubits in length and thirty two cubits in breadth".

- **The Rani Gumpha Theatre was of course for mortals i. e. it is medium rectangular playhouse and measures sixty four cubits in length and thirty two cubits in breadth (96′ × 48′)**

(5) Slokas 18 to 23 read :

"No one should build a playhouse bigger than the above, for a play in it will not be properly expressive. For anything uttered in too big a playhouse will be losing euphony due to weak resonance of the sounds uttered. When the playhouse is very big, the expression in the face on which rests the representation of states and sentiments, will not be distinctly visible. Hence it is desirable that playhouses (of the rectangular type) should be of medium size, so that the recitatives as well as the songs in it may be more easily heard. Creations of Gods in house and gardens are the outcome of their will, while men are to make careful efforts in their creations, hence men should not try to rival the creation of Gods. I shall now describe the characteristics of a house suitable for human beings".

---

3. देवानां भवनं ज्येष्ठं नृणाणां मध्यमं भवेत्। शेषाणां प्रकृतीनां तु कनीयः संविधीयते ॥११॥

4. चतुःषष्टि करान् कुर्य्याद्दीर्घत्वेन तु मण्डपम्। द्वात्रिंशेन तु विस्तारं मर्त्यानां योजयेदिह ॥१७॥

5. अति ऊर्ध्वं न कर्त्तव्यः कर्त्तृभिर्नाट्यमण्डपः। यस्मादव्यक्तभावं हि तत्र नाट्यं व्रजेदिति ॥१८॥
मण्डपे विप्रकृष्टे तु पाठ्यमुच्चारितस्वरम्। अनभिव्यक्तवर्णत्वाद्विरसत्वं भृशं भवेत् ॥१९॥
यश्चाप्यास्यगतो रागो भावसृष्टिः रसाश्रयः। स वेश्मन प्रकृष्टत्वाद्व्रजेदव्यक्ततां परम् ॥२०॥
प्रेक्षागृहाणां सर्वेषां तस्मान्मध्यममिष्यते। यस्माच्छ्राव्यं च गेयं च सुखं श्राव्यतरं भवेत् ॥२१॥
देवानां मानसी सृष्टिः गृहेषूपवनेषु च। यत्नभावाद्विनिष्पन्नाः सर्वे भावास्तु मानुसाः ॥२२॥
तस्माद् देवकृतैर्भावैर्न विस्पर्द्धेत मानुषः। मानुषस्य तु गेहस्य संप्रवक्ष्यामि लक्षणम् ॥२३॥

(6) *Slokas* 33 to 35 read :

"Measure a plot of land sixty four cubits and divide the same into two parts. The part which will be behind will have to be divided again into two equal halves. Of these halves one should be made the upper stage *Rangasirśa*. The passage room or the *Nepathya Gruha* is to be made to the west of this *Rangasirsa*.

- **The Theatre of Ranigumpha measures sixty four cubits in length (96′).**

Half of this i. e. thirty two cubits (48′) is the auditorium. The other half i. e. thirty two cubit (48′) has again been divided. On one half of this i. e. sixteen cubits [24′] is the *Rangasirsa* (upper stage) and to the west of this *Rangasirsa* is the *Nepathya Gruha* [passage rooms.]

The word *Nepathya Gruha* has been identified as either tiring rooms, dressing rooms or green rooms by experts. Although the utilities of these rooms actually also include such functions, I am naming it 'passage rooms' because of the word 'Nepathya', itself. This word is derived from Ni and Patha hence directly relates to path or passage and involves the way i.e. on the way etc.

- The required open space for the auditorium is still there in the Ranigumpa theatre, but now it has been made into levelled grassy lawn.

- The area for the Rangapitha which is required to be of 16 cubits length and 32 cubits breadth (24′ × 48′) is still intact. It has now only a partially (9′) stone cut floor towards it's western side. Though of the same level, the remaining portion is now earth filled.

- The Rangasirsa, also exists of the size of 16 cubits (24′) by 32 cubits (48′) which is exactly what is required. Only the front portion of the Rangasirsa has been damaged and the rocks have given away by few feet.

- The Nepathya Gruhas are located to the west this Rangasirsa and do not form a part of the specified area. This fact is also in accordance with text of Naṭya Sastra.

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6. चतुःषष्टिं करान् कृत्वा द्विधा कुर्य्यात्पुनश्च तान् ॥३३॥
पृष्ठतो यो भवेद्भागो द्विधाभूतोभवेत्ततः ।
तस्यार्द्धेन विभागेन रङ्गशीर्षं प्रयोजयेत् ॥३४॥
पश्चिमेस्थ विभागे च नेपथ्यगृहमादिशेत् ।

(7) In Sloka 35 to 38 it reads.

"Having divided the plot of land according to rules laid before one should lay in it the foundation of the play house in an auspicious day. And during this ceremony, all musical instruments such as conchshell, Dundubhi, Mridanga and Panava should be sounded. And from the place of ceremony undesirable persons such as heretics including Sramanas, men in dark red robes as well as men with physical defects be turned out."

- Natya Sastra mentions turning out of undesirable persons from the place of foundation laying ceremony where Natyamandap is to be constructed.
- Since this Mandapa (medium-rectangular) is meant for the kings and the site is earmarked, the place could also be cordoned before hand. How could the undesirables be there, if it is just an open levelled and plain plot of land needing to be turned out ? After all it is a king's project.

Even today, such convention of keeping the undesirables away from such propitiatory functions, is still followed by a section of people. But the convention does not drive them out, it only prescribes the various misfortunes to follow if you just see them during the time of measurement.

- Natyasastra states no such driving away of undesirables during the measurement day but on the day of foundation ceremony, which is another day.

Evidently the site would surely have to be by the side of a hill or some thing where there would be either caves or some dwellings of undesirables already existing which needed evacuation.

- And to justify Ranigumpha, which consists of a series of Gumphas or caves, it is all the more plausible that there were some caves already existing there, where the undesirables were dwelling, before the spot was chosen for this purpose, until the formal ceremony and these undesirables were asked to go away.
- As it is, we know from the inscriptions of the Hatigumpha, that Kharavela. his family members and his servants had constructed many caves around Khandagiri and the Udayagiri for the heretics.

The 14th and the 15th line of Kharavela's inscription reads thus :

" ... .. Sino basikaroti tera same cho base supabatabijaya chhoke kumari pabate arahato parinibasato hi kayanisi diyaya rajabhatakchi, rajabhatihi, rajaputehi, rajamahisehi, Kharavela Sirina".

"Sata dasa lena satam karapitam sakata- samana-subhitanam-cha-sata disanam- jatinam- tapasa- isinam lenam karayati- .... " etc.

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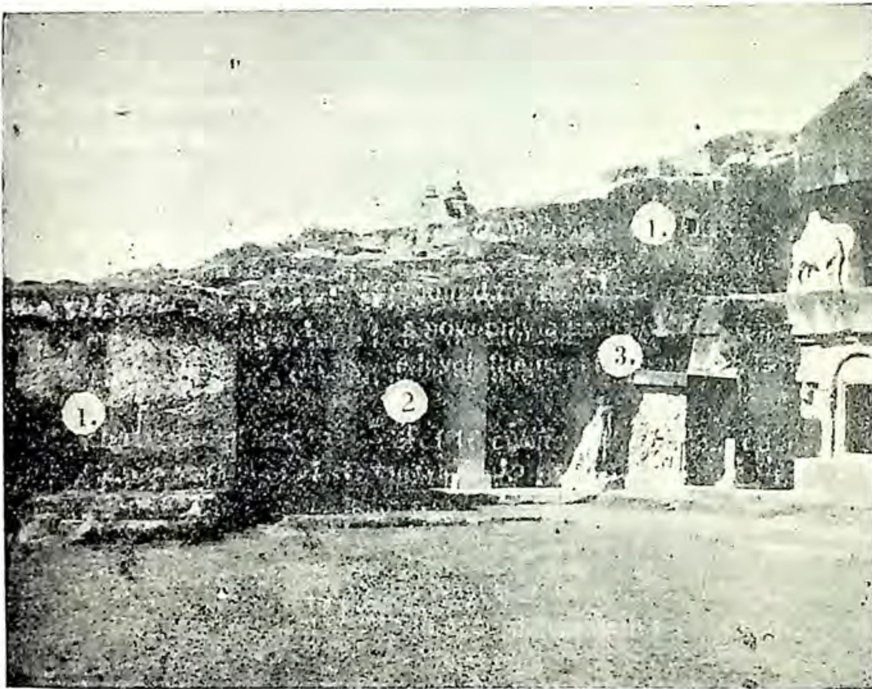
7. विभज्य भागान्विधिवद्यथावदनु पूर्वशः ॥ ३५ ॥ शुभे नक्षत्र योगे च मण्डपस्य निवेशनम् ।
शङ्ख दुन्दुभि निर्घोषै मृदङ्गपणवादिभिः ॥ ३६ ॥ सर्वतूर्य्यनिनादैश्च स्थापनं कार्य्यमेव च ।
उत्सार्य्याणि त्वनिष्टानि पाषण्डश्रमिणस्तथा ॥ ३७ ॥ कषायवसनाश्चैव विकलाश्चैव ये नराः ।

Which means. in the thirteenth year in his kingdom of victory, Shri Kharavela, his queen, son, brother, relatives and servants constructed 117 nos. of caves for the heretics i.e. the Arahatas, Shramanas, Jatis, Tapasas and Rishis.

It is possible that some of these caves were evacuated to convert this area as a theatre. Coincidently, Natyasastra states about 'Shramana' and even this word 'Samana' appears in the inscription of Kharavela and all types of persons mentioned above usually wear 'Kasaya', coloured or dark red cloths.

(8) Sloka 63-65 Natyasastra states :

"At the side of the Rangapitha (lower stage) the Mattavarani should be built and this should have four pillars and should be equal in length to the Rangapitha and its plinth should be a cubit and a half high (than that of Rangapitha). The plinth of the Rangamandala (auditorium) should be equal in height of two (Mattavarani).



Right side view of Ranigumpha Theatre
(1. KUHARA 2 MATTAVARANI 3. Landing for Staircase.)

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8. रङ्गपीठस्य पार्श्वे तु कर्त्तव्या मत्तवारणी ॥ ६३ ॥ अध्यर्धहस्तोत्सेधेन कर्त्तव्या मत्तवारणी ॥६४॥
चतुःस्तम्भसमायुक्ता रङ्गपीठप्रमाणतः । उत्सेधेन तयोस्तुल्यं कर्त्तव्यं रङ्गमण्डलम् ।

- On each side of the Rangapitha (Lower stage) of the Ranigumpha theatre there exists the Mattavaranis. Each has four pillars (including pilasters) and are almost of the same length. The plinth of the Mattavarani is 1½ cubit higher than the level of the Rangapitha. It is thus assumed that the plinth of the Rangamandala or the auditorium was of the same height of the Mattavarani i. e. 1½ cubit (2′-3″). The Mattavaranis are the side rooms and nothing else. These, in comparison to the modern theatre can be identified as green rooms located in the so called wings both at right side and left side of the acting area.

- Stage or the acting area in Ranigumpha theatre is identified in two levels both at Rangapitha (the lower floor) and at Rangasirsa, (the upper floor).

- And hence the Mattavaranis or the side rooms are most befittingly located on either sides of both the floors thereby bringing the total number of Mattavaranis to four.

- But while Natyasastra gives specifications for the Mattavaranis of the Rangapitha, nothing has been prescribed for similar rooms of Rangasirsa. In the Ranigumpha theatre though these are located, they vary in their shapes, sizes and number of pillars on them.

Mattavaranis of Rani Gumpha Theatre

Location	Place	Side	Nos. of Rooms.	Nos. of pillars (Including pilasters)
Lower Floor	Rangapitha	Right	3	4
Lower Floor	Rangapitha	Left	1	4
Upper Floor	Rangasirsa	Right	1	2
Upper Floor	Rangasirsa	Left	1	3

- These existing side rooms do not form a part of the specified area of the Prekshyagruha. Natyasastra specifically says that these should be at the sides (Parswatah) and names them as Mattavarani (?) There seems to be a lot of controversy and confusion about the meaning of this word Mattavarani. I fully agree with those who have meant it as side rooms; only with slight change.

According to me :—

The word 'Mattavarani' can be explained to mean rooms of NO ADMISSION. The term is a combination of two words 'Matta' and 'Varani'. Matta stands for

'Emotion' and 'Varani' means restriction. Together therefore it stands for the place where admission is restricted or prohibited for emotional people, perhaps meant for spectators. Being rooms where artists do their make up, dressing or rest, like the present day green rooms, the admission is prohibited to these rooms and hence the name Matta Varani. They are located nearer the acting places in this rectangular theatre.

(Please see pictures at Page 18 and Page 21).

- This establishes for all times that 'Mattavarani' mentioned in Nātya Sastra is (i) not a verandah or (ii) not a decorative frieze or rows of elephants in rut, **it is the side rooms**, to which admission is prohibited.

(9) Sloka 67-68, Natyasastra reads :

'According to these rules the Mattavaranis should be built. Then one should construct the lower stage (Rangapitha) and then the upper stage (Rangasirsa) complete with SAD-DARUKA (A frame work made with six pieces of wood) according to the prescribed laws'.

- No woodwork exists now in the Ranigumpha theatre nor can be expected to exist after these thousands of years.

I have been intrigued by the difference of opinions which prevails amongst the commentators of Natyasastra about this word SAD-DARUKA. Invariably all have agreed that 'Sad-Daruka' is a framework consisting of six pieces of wood. While some have taken it to be the frame work to support the stage planks, there are others who have interpreted it as series of such frameworks to form fence or barricades. There are yet others who have not identified the location or it's use but have admitted the existence.

- It can safely be assumed that the 'Sad-Daruka' was the 'connecting link' between the 'Rangapitha' (Lower stage) and 'Rangasirsa' (Upper stage). The Sad-Daruka is the stairs which in many Indian languages is known as 'Sidi'.

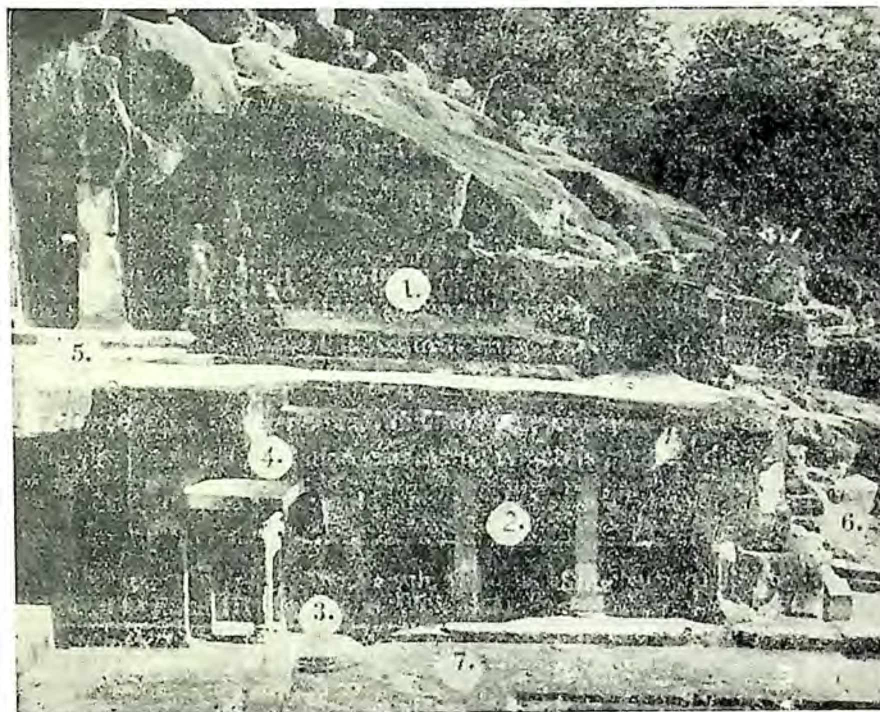
The stairs are usually made of wood and the name Sad-Daruka is derived because six pieces of wood are used for it to make.

- The 'Sad-Daruka' or 'Sidi' located on either sides, were close to the Mattavaranis of the Rangapitha.

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9. एवं विधिपुरश्कारैः कर्त्तव्या मत्तवारणी ॥ ६७ ॥
रङ्गपीठं ततः कार्य्यं विधिदृष्टेन कर्मणा ।
रङ्गशीर्षं तु कर्त्तव्यं षड्दारुकसमन्वितम ॥ ६८ ॥

The landings of these stair cases are still there in the Ranigumpha Theatre on either side of the Rangapitha below the floor of the Rangasirsa. Incidentally there exists no other provisions anywhere around the Ranigumpha, to climb up to the first floor. As it is now, in absence of a ladder one has to do a bit of mountaineering to reach there and look around.



Left side view of Ranigumpha Theatre.

1. SUPITHAM,
2. MATTAVARANI
3. Base for the ṠAD-DARUKA
4. Landing of the SAD-DARUKA
5. The first floor, RANGASIRSA
6. Wall marks
7. The ground floor. RANGAPITHA.

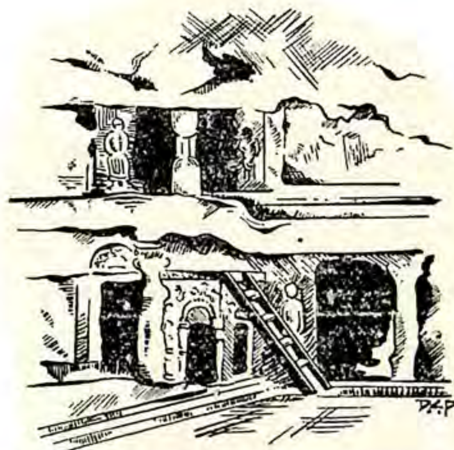


Illustration of the location of the staircase. the SAD-DARUKA

- We have a full upper stage (Rangasirsa) at the Ranigumpha theatre. Rangasirsa is not the stage surface as some experts opine but it is a regular floor at a height of 10 from the floor of the lower stage (Rangapitha).

(10) Sloka 69 reads :

"The passage room (Nepathya) should have two doors'.

- Since there is no wood work existing now it can be assumed that there were two wooden doors supplied for the passage rooms or Nepathya.

These two doors were located on either side behind the acting area on the first floor (Rangasirsa) and were facing the auditorium which is on the east. These doors were close to the Mattavaranis located on either side of the upper stage also.

- Nepathya Gruhas are the passage rooms and are located behind the acting area in the Ranigumpha theatre. There are two series of rooms on either floors, one behind Rangasirsa on the first floor and the other behind Rangapitha on the ground floor.

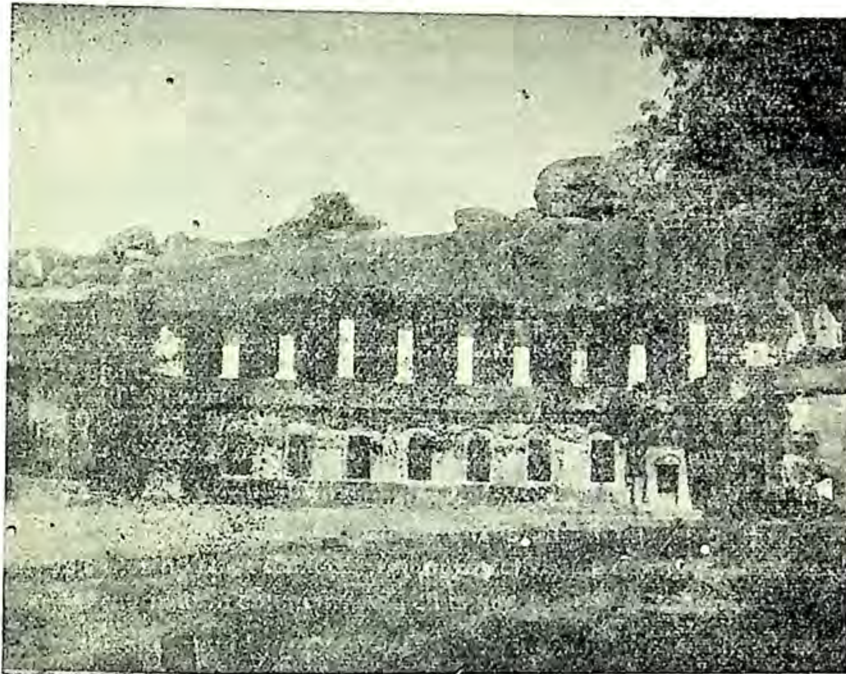
- As I have mentioned before at No. 6, a front portion of the Rangasirsa of the Ranigumpha theatre had given away. The pillars based on the ground floor which were carrying the load of this front portion, had also been damaged and the floor has now been trimmed. We can still locate their base marks even now. However, the rooms, (The Nepathya Gruhas of the Rangapitha) are still there intact, complete with topless verandah, and the high bench near the wall.

- The plinth of the Nepathya Gruhas are $1\frac{1}{2}$ cubits (2'-3') higher than the acting area in both the floors. Inevitably, the Nepathya Gruhas of Rangapitha are exactly under the Rangasirsa, or in other words the Rangasirsa forms the roof top of the Nepathya Gruhas of Rangapitha in Ranigumpha Theatre.

- While Mattavaranis are the side rooms, the Nepathya Gruhas are the back rooms of the acting area in a rectangular theatre.

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10. कार्य्यं द्वारद्वयं चात्र नेपथ्यंगृहकस्यतु ।



The Nepathya Gruhas of Ranigumpha Theatre.

(11) Sloka 72-73, Natyasastra states :

"Thus the upper stage (Rangasirsa) should be carefully constructed. It's floor must not be (convex) like the back of a tortoise or (sloped) that of a fish."

"The base floor of the upper stage (Rangasirsa) which is surfaced like that of a mirror is commendable."

- The floor of the upper stage (Rangasirsa) of the Ranigumpha theatre is extremely levelled and it was likely that the surface was like that of a mirror when built.

We know now, that Ranigumpha theatre was the royal theatre of King Kharavela. It is no wonder that all care must have been taken to make everything posh.

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11. एवंविधैश्च कर्त्तव्यं रङ्गशीर्षं प्रयत्नतः । कूर्मपृष्ठं न कर्त्तव्यं मत्स्यपृष्ठं तथैवच ॥ ७२ ॥
शुद्धादर्शतलाकारं रङ्गशीर्षं प्रशस्यते ।

(12) Slokas 84-74 state :

'Jewels and precious stones should be laid underneath this by expert builders. Diamond is to be put in the eas, lapis lazuli in the south, quartz in the west and coral in the north, in the centre gold."

- There is every probability that the Ranigumpha theatre had all these. Built by Kharavela, who brought immense wealth upon each of his expeditions.

His inscription also gives an account of the jewels, gems and precious stones which embedded to the pillars, ornamental floor and ceiling of a hall.

In the 10th line his inscription says :-

'BEDURIYA KALINGA-RAJANIVASAM-MAHAVIJAYA PASADOM
KARAYATI ATTHATISSAYA SATA-SAHASEHI' etc.

Which means that having spent thirty eight lakhs, he built up Mahavijaya Prasada' (Palace of victory) for the residence of the king of Kalinga having studded with lapis lazuli. And again in the same line it says.

'Ekadashame cha vase .. ... mani-abtanani saha jati'

This means that 'In the eleventh year he set out in a procession with ruby, gem and precious stones.

In the 12th line ... ..

'Barasame cha base sata sahasehi'

'In the twelveth year he spent lakhs × × ×

In the 13th line ....
... .sata vasuki ratanam pesayanit...

This means 'Sata vasuki presented him gem and precious stones ....
Also in the same line..................

'........ Pandaraja vividhabharanani muta-mani-ratanani aharapayati idha sata-sahasahi............'

12. रत्नानि चात्र देयानि पूर्वं वज्रं विचक्षणैः ।
वैदुर्य्यं दक्षिणे चैव स्फटिकं पश्चिमे तथा ॥ ७३ ॥
प्रवालमुत्तरे चैव मध्ये तु कनकं भवेत् ॥ ७४ ॥

Which means that, 'He (Kharavela) caused the Pandya king to bring him jewels, rubies as well as numerous pearls in hundreds ' etc.

In the 16th. line .. ..

'Patalika Catare cha bedariya gabhe thambhe patithapayati sata-sahasehi bedariya-nila-bochhinnam checha-jatthi-adhasatinkam tiriya upadayati ... ...'

' .. .. he built up a huge theatre with 50 pillars and roof bedecked with beryl, gems, pearls and precious stones.

- All these facts and figures speak for themselves, the immense treasure Kharavela had.

(13) In Slokas 75 & 76 Natyasastra states :

"And the wood work of the theatre roof has to be done Rafters and cross beams with many decorative designs, carved figures of tigers, elephants, lions are to be made."

The Ranigumpha Theatre had a roof (The Rangasira) over a wooden frame-work. Most probably the roof was thatched or tiled and under the roof there must have been a beautiful wooden or applique lining also.

- The existing decorative designs and the remnants of the carved figures of various kinds on the rocks, give us an idea of the gigantic artistic work which must have been associated with this magnificient monument, thousands of years ago.



Carvings at Ranigumpha Theatre, Udayagiri, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.

13. एवं रङ्गशिरः कृत्वा दारुकर्म प्रवर्त्तयेत् ।
उहप्रत्युह संयुक्तं नानाशिल्प प्रयोजितम् ॥७५॥
नाना भञ्जवरोपेतं बहुव्यालोपशोभितम् ।

There still exists many well cut round holes on the rocks in which the wooden poles were being inserted.



Carvings at Ranigumpha Theatre, Udayagiri, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.

(14) In Slokas 76 to 80 Natyasastra states ;

"In this upper storey many wooden statues and other decorations should be set up. Also doors, peepholes, decorated platforms, ornamental mechanised latticed windows, good seats, numerous dove cots and decorative pillars at various places, And the wood work having been finished, the builders should set out to finish the walls. No pillars, bracket, window corner or door should face a door."

- The Ranigumpha Theatre has an upper storey (Attalam) Pillars (Stambhas) Brackets (Nagadantam), Peepholes (Kuhara) and Good seat (Supitham). Doors (Niryuha) and Windows (Vatayanam) were surely there.

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14. अट्टालं भञ्जिकाभिश्च समन्तात्समलंकृतम् ॥७५॥
निर्यूहकुहरोपेतं नानाग्रथितवेदिकम् ।
नानाविन्याससंयुक्तं यन्त्रजालगवाक्षकम् ॥७७॥
सुपीठधारणायुक्तं कपोतालिसमाकुलम् ।
नानाकुट्टिमविन्यस्तैः स्तम्भैश्चाप्युपशोभितम् ॥७८॥
एवं काष्ठविधिं कृत्वा भित्तिकर्म प्रयोजयेत् ।
स्तम्भं वा नागदन्तं वा वातायनमथापि वा ॥७९॥
कोणं वा सप्रतिद्वारं द्वारविद्धं न कारयेत् ।



Carvings at Ranigumpa Theatre Udayagiri, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.
Being seated on a "Supitham", the King and the Queen
applauding a performance.

- There could not have been number of good seats in rows because of the fact that this is on the upper storey of the acting side and we have no account available to know whether the auditorium also had two floors as clearly indicated for the stage.

Since the auditorium space is thirty two cubits square, it could take another floor for the auditorium but in that case actings done on the Rangapitha (the groundstage) will not be seen to many on the first floor, while actings done on Rangasirsa (upper stage) can be only seen from the first floor auditorium.

- Good seat described as 'Supitham' is located on the platform given on the Upper storey. It can only be assumed that atleast one row of seats cut out of the rocks were there on either side on the first floor, starting from front corners of Rangasirsa towards the auditorium above the Mattavaranis, like the side balcony seats.

As it is, in Rani Gumpha theatre we do have specified space for this distinguished good seat 'Supitham', on the upper storey probably meant for the King and Queen. This could also be used for the character in the role of King. This is located above the left Mattavarani of the lower stage (1 in page 21) There is also another small similar structure on the right side above the right Mattavarani of Rangapitha (lower stage).

These are the only places for good seats or 'Supitham' from where most of the things what goes on the acting areas of both the floors can be viewed properly.

No pillars, brackets, window corner or door had faced a door.

Natyasastra does not say that in the medium rectangular type of theatre, the Rangamandala or the auditorium should also be in tiers, whereas for the square type of theatre (Caturasra) this sitting arrangement has been very clearly prescribed to be in tier (Sopanakruti Pithakam).

(15) Natyasastra tells us in Sloka 65:

'The plinth of the Rangamandala or the auditorium will be of the same height as that of the Mattavaranis'.

The plinth of the Mattavarani has been prescribed as one and a half cubit high. So we know that the plinth of the Rangamandala or the auditorium is also one and a half cubit high from the plinth of the Rangapitha or the lower stage.

- Most properly the auditorium was also in tier. Even if it was just a platform having a plinth of one and a half cubit, would also be in the sight lines for the actions done on the Rangasirsa.

I have checked up and found out that even sitting on a level of one and a half cubit high (supposed to be the first row in the auditorium) one can see every thing that goes on on the front portion of Rangasirsa, because although the distance between the first row of the auditorium and the first point in the acting area on the Rangasirsa on the direct axis is sixteen cubits (24') away, is ten feet high up.

But, having built such a beautiful royal theatre, King Kharavela would not have left a platform for the accommodation of his distinguished spectators. Although there is no evidence now to prove that there was a gallery opposite the Rani Gumpha, the levelled lawn indicates some clearance job done either before or after it's discovery. A heap of age-old debris of stones and earth with heavy undergrowth of bushes and shrubs must have been wiped-off to clear the view of Ranigumpha.

Open space sufficient enough to hold a gallery with passages for entry and exit, corridors, aisle, lobby, foyer etc. is available intact at the Rani Gumpha Theatre premises.

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15. उत्सेधेन तयोस्तुल्यं कर्त्तव्यं रङ्गमण्डपम् ।

I assume that the main gate of this theatre was on tne east side with two side gates, one on the north side and the other on the south side (the present approach to the (Ranigumpha). There was a flight of steps to go up to the main gate on the hill from the east side of Udayagiri.

However, whether there was just a platform or a gallery, the total honourable accommodation will not exceed more than 400 spectators in the Rangamandala of Madhyama Vikrsta Prekshya Gruha.

(16) In Slokas 80 to 82 Natyasastra states :-

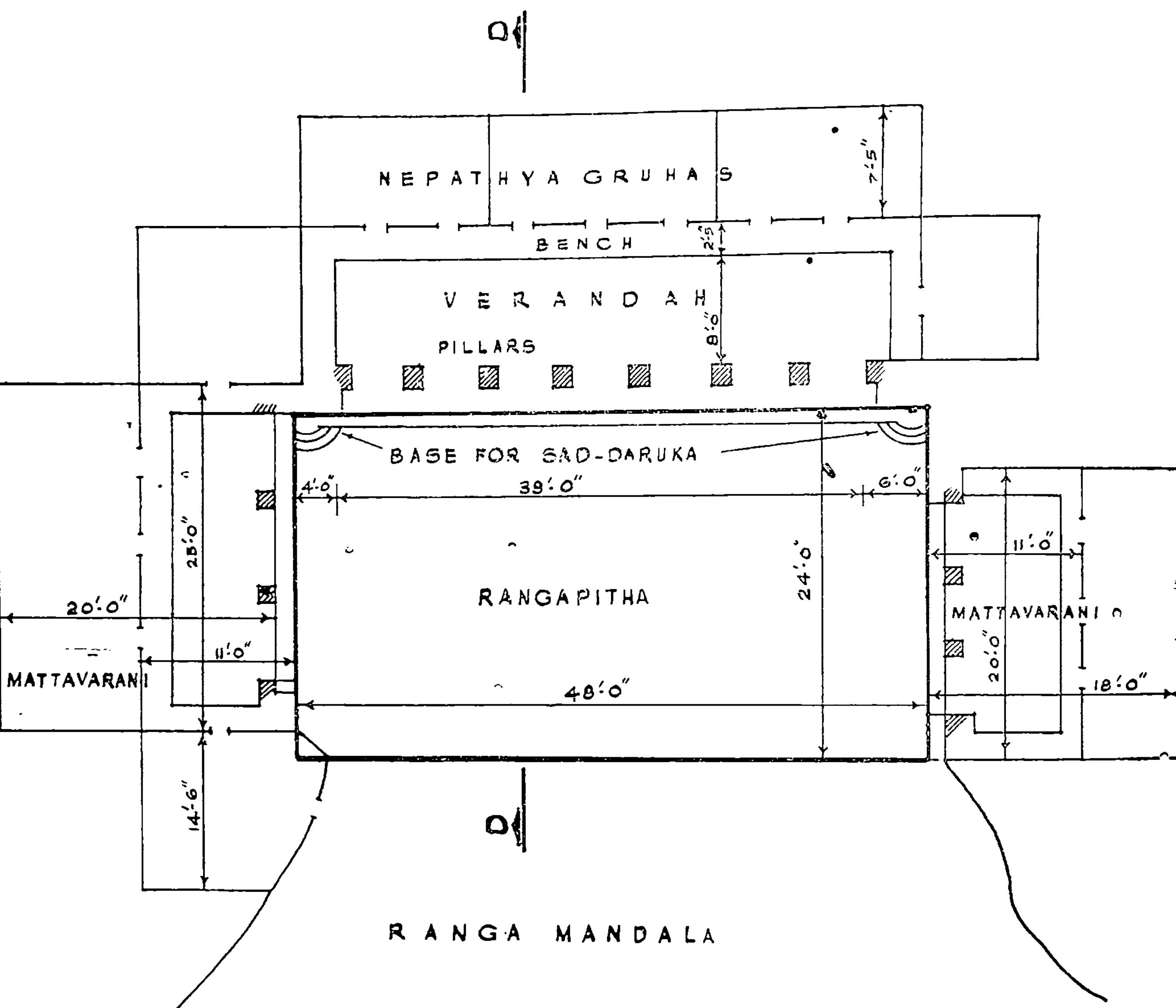
"The play house should be made like a mountain cavern and it should have two floors and small windows. And it should be free from wind and should have good acoustic quality. For in such play house made from the interference of wind, voice of actors and singers as well as sound of musical instruments will acquire volume".

The Ranigumpha theatre is itself a series of Gumphas, it is a mountain cavern and it has two floors in two different levels. The first floor (Rangasirsa) is located at a level of ten feet higher than that of the ground floor where Rangapitha is located. It had very small windows. It is free from wind and it has very good acoustic quality. In this Ranigumpha theatre the voice of actors and singers as well as sound of musical instruments do acquire volume even in the present conditions.

Even now you need no microphone at the Ranigumpha theatre, because even small tones are heard to the distant places in the auditorium from Rangapitha, Rangasirsa and Nepathya Gruhas of both floors.

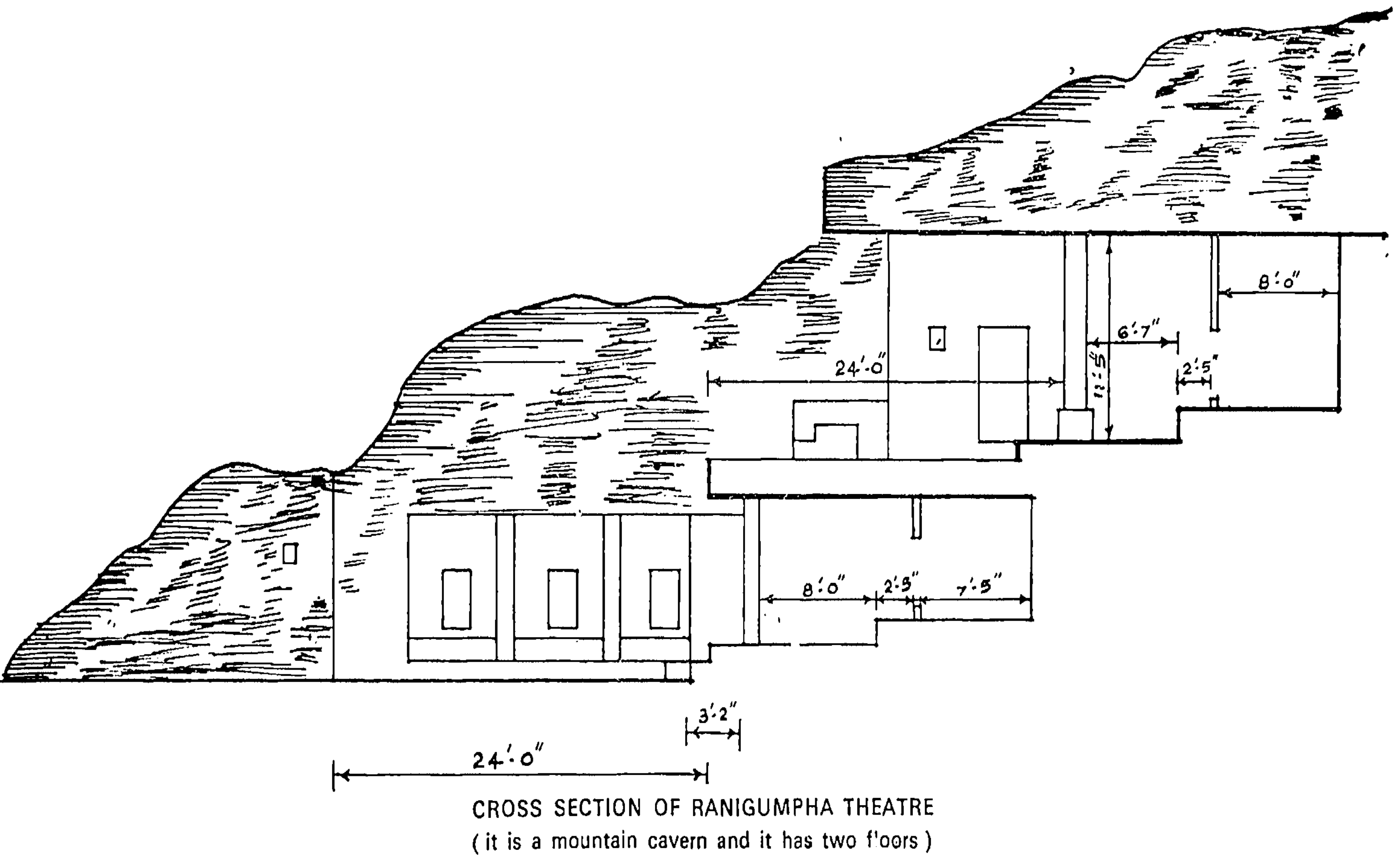
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16. कार्य्यः शैलगुहाकारो द्विभूमिर्नाट्यमण्डपः॥८०॥
मन्दवातायनोपेतो निर्वातो धीरशब्दभाक्।
तस्मान्निवीतःकर्त्तव्यः कर्त्तृभिर्नाट्यमण्डपः ८१॥
गम्भीरस्वरता येन कुतपस्य भविष्यति।

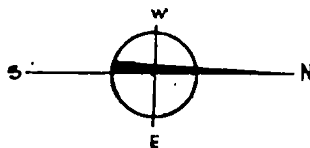


GROUND FLOOR PLAN

OF RANIGUMPHA THEATRE, UDAYAGIRI, BHUBANESWAR.



CROSS SECTION OF RANIGUMPHA THEATRE
(it is a mountain cavern and it has two f'oors)



NEPATHYA GRUHAS

8'-0"

2'-5"

BENCH

VERANDAH

6'-7"

PILLARS

3'-0"

SIDE ROOM (MATTA VARTANI)

7'-6"

15'-0"

RANGA SIRSA

24'-0"

48'-0"

SIDE ROOM MATTA VARANI

15'-0"

15'-0"

SEATS

8'-0"

12' 0"

SUPITHAM

11'-0"

7'-6"

6'-0"

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

OF RANIGUMPHA THEATRE, UDAYAGIRI, BHUBANESWAR.

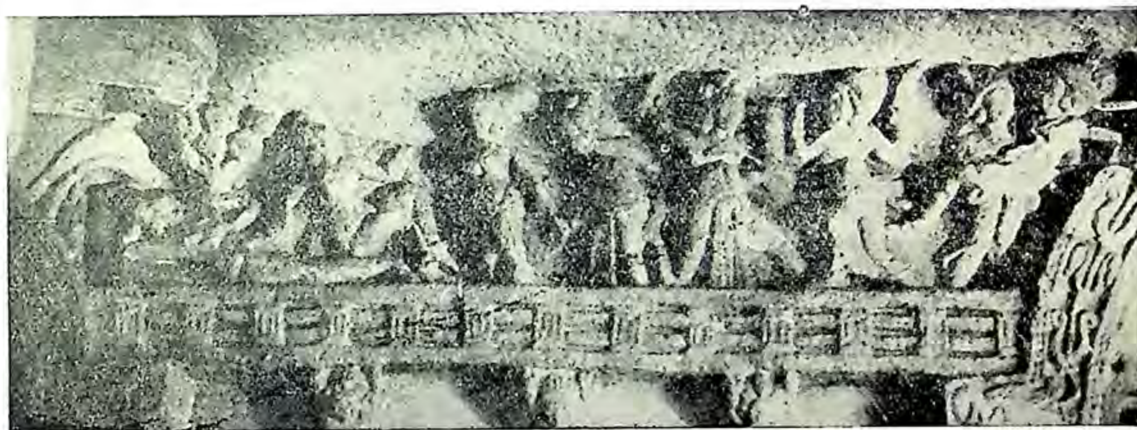
SCALE :- 1" = 8'-0"

(17) In Slokas 82 to 84 Natyasastra states :

"The construction of walls being finished, they should be plastered and carefully white washed. After they have been smeared with plaster and lime made perfectly clean and beautifully plain, painting should be executed on them. In this painting should be depicted creepers, men, women and their amorous exploits".

- Ranigumpha Theatre as exists today is only the rock cut portions, which consists Rangapitha, Rangasirsa, Mattavarani, Nepathya etc. All other portions such as auditorium, outerwalls, roof, gate etc., had been constructed to complete the theatre. These are no more there but the fact that walls were fixed to the rocks can be identified from the joining points, as the rock-cut marks are still there (please see No. 6 in photograph at page 21). The designs and paintings of the given description were also there.

As it is, there still exists engraved carvings of creepers, men, women and their amorous exploits.



Carvings at Ranigumpha Theatre, Udayagiri, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.

17. भित्तिकर्मविधिं कृत्वा भित्तिलेपं प्रदापयेत् ।
सुधाकर्म तथैवास्य कुर्य्याद्बाह्यं प्रयत्नतः ॥८२॥
भित्तिष्वपि च लिप्तासु परिमृष्टासु सर्वतः ।
समासु जातशोभासु चित्रकर्म प्रयर्त्तयेत् ॥८३॥
चित्रकर्माणि चालेख्याः पुरुषाः स्त्रीजनास्तथा ।
लताबन्धाश्च कर्त्तव्याश्चरितं चात्मभोगजम् ॥८४॥

(18) In Sloka 85, Natyasastra states :-

"Thus the architect should construct a play house of the rectangular type".

- This proves beyond doubt that one of the "Catara" or "Jathara" built by Arya Maharaja Mahameghavahana Kalingadhipati Shri Kharavela, on the Udayagiri hills of Bhubaneswar, Orissa, is nothing but a regular theatre which was built as per the specifications given in the second chapter of the Natyasastra of Bharat Muni, for the Madhyama Vikrsta Prekshyaveshma.

This "Catara" (now more dearly called as the Ranigumpha or Rani Hansapur or the Rani Naur) is evidently the only (until another is discovered somewhere) existing specimen in the world of the 'Hindu Theatre' or 'Sanskrit Theatre' or the Classical Indian Theatre of the Medium rectangular variety meant for the King

- When a regular theatre has now been discovered to be of the exact specifications of the Natyasastra of Bharat Muni, this establishes the existence of 'Natyasastra' before Kharavela i. e. before over two thousand years from now.

- It could also be that Natyasastra was written by Bharat Muni after studying the measurements of Ranigumpha Theatre built by Kharavela.

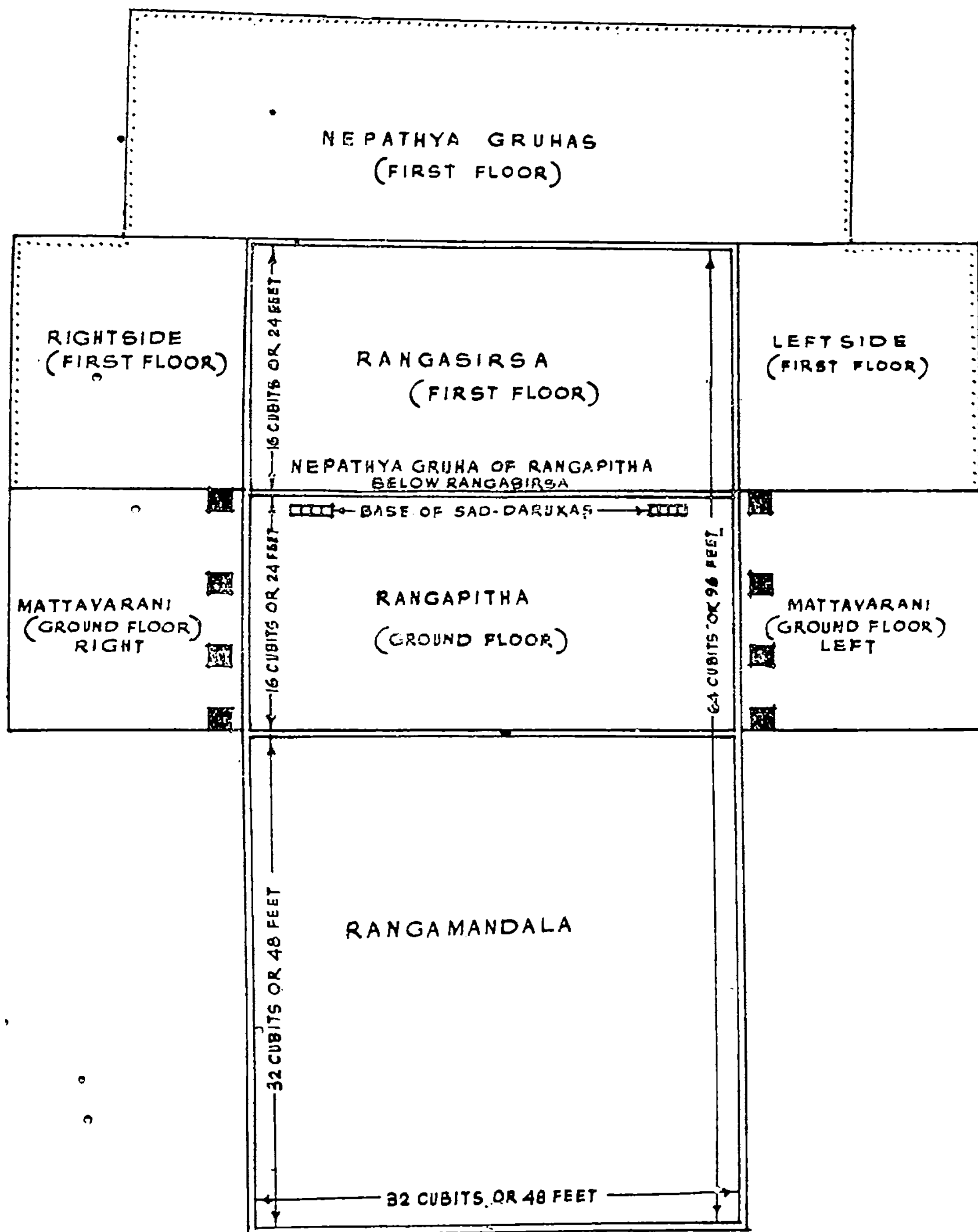
- This discovery of the 'Madhyama Vikrsta Prekshyaveshma' or the middle sized rectangular theatre at the Ranigumpha of Udayagiri, Bhubaneswar Orissa has helped us to form a clear conception of the ancient Indian rectangular theatre.

In the light of above, let us go into the details of the other two types, the square and the triangular ones.

- We have to bear in mind that the specifications given for the 'Vikrsta Madhyama Theatre (which is accordingly meant for the Kings) do not necessarily hold good for the other two types, the Caturasra and the Tryasra. In fact the specifications given for this 'Vikrsta Madhyama' in the text are and holds good for, just one out of the other specified varieties. Hence the same specifications cannot hold good for other varieties except for the item for which it specifically makes a mention.

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18. एवं विकृष्टं कर्त्तव्यं नाट्यवेश्मप्रयोक्तिभिः ॥८५॥



THE MIDDLE RECTANGULAR TYPE OF PLAY HOUSE (VIKRUSTA MADHYAMA PREKSHYA GRUHA)

PREKSHYAGRUHA LAXSMANAM OF THE SQUARE TYPE PLAYHOUSE.

(19) Natyasastra, in its Slokas 86 to 88 states :

"Now I shall speak of the characteristics of that of the square type. A plot of land, thirty two cubits in length and breadth, is to be measured out in an auspicious moment, and on it the playhouse should be erected by experts in dramatic arts. Rules, definitions and propitiatory ceremonies mentioned before will also apply to that of the square type.

- It should be remembered that rules, definitions etc., meant for the medium rectangular theatre which are also applicable to this square type theatre, are only those of the propitiatory ceremonies etc., as prescribed in this Sloka and they do not hold good as regards the type, style and specification of this square type

As for example 'Natyasastra prescribed Karya Saila Guhakaro' etc., for the Rectangular type but has not said anything like that for the other types. Similarly nothing has been said about the 'Sad-Daruka' for the other types.

(20) In Slokas 88 to 89, Natyasastra states :

"It should be made perfectly square and divided into requisite parts by holding the string, and it's outer walls should be made with strong bricks very thickly set together."

- This should be pointed out that division into 'requisite parts' does not necessarily bind us to follow exactly what is given for the Medium Rectangular (Vikrsta) type The division may vary, and it does vary to a great extent as we proceed to understand it.

(21) Sloka 89 reads :

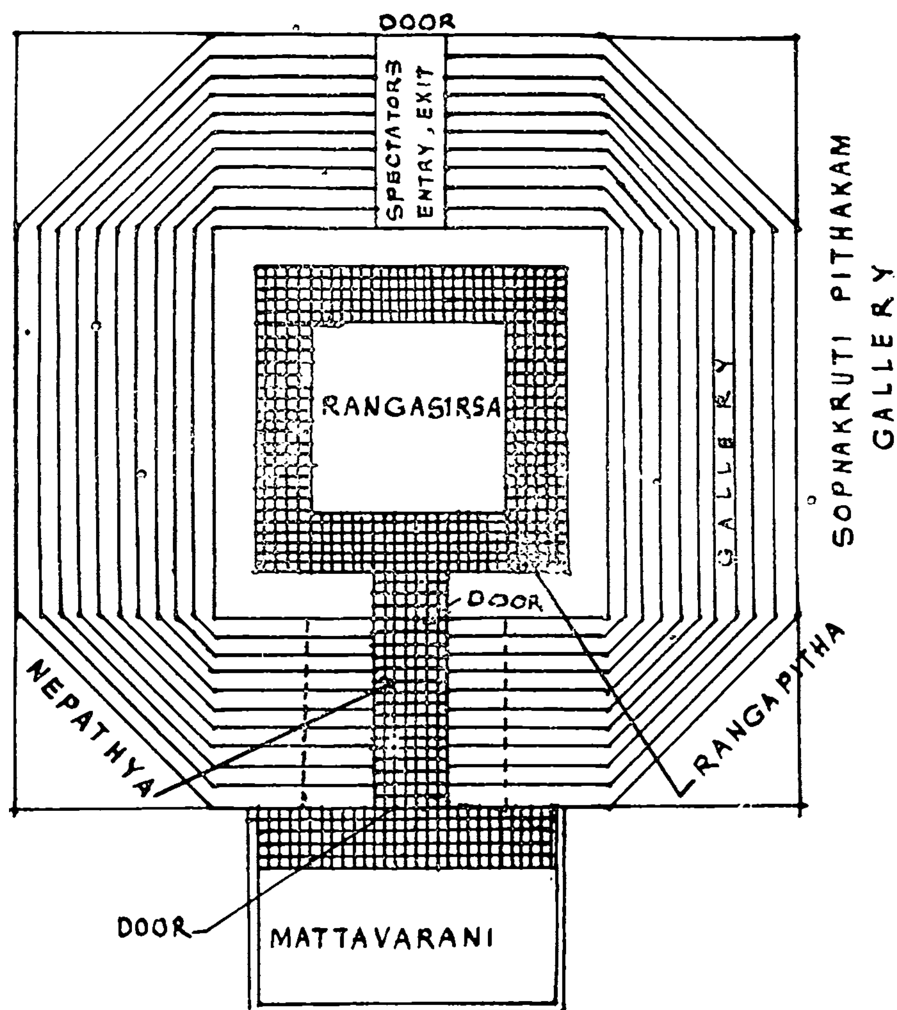
'In the centre (Abhyantara) of this area (the square one with brick outer walls) the stage (Rangapitha) has to be made at the place marked earlier.'

- 'Abhyantara' is the inside centre and 'Jathadisham' is the place marked earlier or earmarked.
- In this 'Caturasra' (square type) of playhouse the acting area is centrally located and the spectators sit all around, unlike the 'Vikrsta', where the acting area is on one side and spectators on the other.

Naturally the style of presentation of the performance in it is just like the common traditional Jatra of Orissa.

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19. अतःपरं प्रवक्ष्यामि चतुरस्रस्य लक्षणम् ।
समन्ततस्तु कर्त्तव्या हस्ता द्वात्रिंशदेव तु ॥८६॥
शुभभूमिविभागस्थो नाट्यज्ञैर्नाट्यमण्डपः ।
यो विधिः पूर्वमुक्तस्तु लक्षणं मङ्गलानि च ॥८७॥
चतुरस्रस्य तान्येव कारयेन्नाट्यमण्डपः ।
20 चतुरस्त्रं समंकृत्वा सूत्रेण प्रविभज्य च ॥८८॥
वाह्यतः सर्वतः कार्य्या भित्तिः श्लिष्टेष्टका दृढा ।
21. तत्राभ्यन्तरतः कार्य्या रङ्गपीठे यथादिशम् ॥८९॥



SQUARE PLAY HOUSE (CATURASRA PREKHSYA GRUHA)

(22) In Slokas 90 to 95 Natyasastra says :

"Ten pillars capable of supporting the roof should be raised. Outside the pillars, seats should be constructed in the form of a staircase by means of bricks and wood, for the accommodation of spectators, successive rows of seats should be made one cubit higher than those proceeding them and the lowest row of seats being one cubit higher than the floor. And all these seats should be in proper sightlines."

"Six more good pillars capable of supporting the roof should be raised in suitable positions as per principles. And in addition, eight more pillars should be raised above these. The seating arrangements (for spectators) should be made there in eight cubits space and more pillars should be raised to support the roof of the playhouse which should be made strong with supporting beams and be decorated with wooden dolls."

- This in relation to '6', (at page 16) would clearly mean that this is a playhouse with acting area, 'Rangapitha' in the centre (Abhyantara) and not at a side or one-sided as some experts opine.

There was spectators gallery all around overlooking the acting area, having proper sight lines.

(23) Natyasastra in Slokas 95 to 96 reads ;

'Then one should carefully construct the passage room (for artists). It should have one door leading to the acting area and another door opposite it, through which persons (artists) should enter. There should also be a second door facing the auditorium (for spectators entry into the auditorium)'.

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22. दशप्रयोक्तृभिः स्तम्भाः शक्ता मण्डपधारणे ।
स्तम्भानां वाह्यतः स्थाप्यं सोपानाकृतिपीठकम् ॥९०॥
इष्टका दारुभिः कार्य्यं प्रेक्षकाणां निवेशनम् ।
हस्तप्रमाणैरुत्सेधैर्भूमिभागसमन्वितैः ॥९१॥
रङ्गपीठावलोक्यं तु कुर्य्यादासनिकं विधिम् ।
षडन्यान् सुन्दरान्दद्यात्पुनः स्तम्भान्यथादिशम् ॥९२॥
विधिना धारयेत्प्राज्ञो दृढान्मण्डपधारणे ।
अष्टौस्तम्भान् पुनश्चैव तेषामुपरि कारयेत् ॥९३॥
स्थाप्यंचैव ततः पीठमष्टहस्त प्रमाणतः ।
तत्रस्तम्भाः प्रदातव्यास्तज्ज्ञैर्मण्डपधारणे ॥९४॥
धारिणी धारितासते च शालस्त्रीभिरलंकृताः ।

23. नेपथ्यगृहकं चैव ततः कार्य्यं प्रयोक्तृभिः ॥ ९५ ॥
द्वारं चैकं भवेत्तस्य रङ्गपीठप्रवेशने ।
जनप्रवेशनं चैवमाभिमुख्येन कारयेत् ॥ ९६ ॥
रङ्गस्याभिमुखं कार्य्यं द्वितीयं द्वारमेव तु ।

- This is to mean that the artists after leaving the dressing room were to enter through a door into the Nepathyagruha or the (Artist's passage room where they were to wait until their roles came. During the performance they pass through another door leading into the acting area.

Another door on the other side was meant for entry and exit of spectators into the auditorium.

- The size of this 'Nepathya Gruha' or the passage room for artists in a square playhouse is not prescribed, nor it is said that it should be exactly as that of the 'Nepathya Gruha' of the rectangular playhouse.
- It is thus, a different type of 'Nepathya Gruha' in the 'Caturasra' theatre in comparison to the Nepathya Gruha of the 'Vikrsta' theatre.

(24) In Slokas 97-98 Natyasastra states :

'The acting area should be eight cubits in length and breadth. It should be square, levelled and like a decorated platform'.

- As we know 'Rangapitha' and 'Rangasirsa' are not the same although both are acting areas in two different levels.

This eight cubits square mentioned here is meant for the 'Rangasirsa' and not for the 'Rangapitha, as mentioned, because of the fact that the word 'Rangapitha' is again used in Sloka 99 (See 26, at page 40).

- Since it indicates clearly that this acting area should be eight cubits length and breadth, the idea of some experts showing illustrations with eight cubits length and thirty two cubits breadth is not acceptable because it becomes rectangular instead of a square.
- Eight cubits square can be justifiably located centrally in a thirty two cubits square thereby leaving sufficient space around.

(25) In Slokas 98-99 Natyasastra states :

It's Mattavarani should be made according to the rules prescribed before and should be made with four pillars. The Rangapitha (lower stage) should be either more elevated than the plinth of Mattavarani or equal to it in height.

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24. अष्टहस्तं तु कर्त्तव्यं रङ्गपीठ प्रमाणतः ॥ १७ ॥
चतुरस्रं समतलं वेदिका समलंकृतम् ।
(Read 'Rangasirsa' in stead of 'Rangapitha' here)

25. पूर्वप्रमाणनिर्द्दिष्टा कर्त्तव्या मत्तवारिणी ॥ १८ ॥
चतुःस्तम्भसमायुक्ता वेदिकायास्तु पार्श्वतः ।

- As I have affirmed before 'Mattavarani' is the side room. The specifications of Mattavarani of the rectangular theatre hold good for the square theatre also.

Mattavarani in the middle rectangular theatre does not come within its specified area which is sixty four cubits by thirty two cubits. It is located on either sides only.

In square playhouse, we accept the same principles with four pillars and locate it on one side outside the auditorium. (Please see illustration at page 37)

- No where it states that it should have two Mattavaranis for the square theatre. Only one Mattavarani for the square type of playhouse is acceptable because of the restriction of the number of doors.

(26) Sloka-99 of Natyasastra reads thus :

'The Rangapitha' should be made of the same level or higher than that of the plinth of the Mattavarani.

Since I have stated that square type of playhouse will have the acting area centrally located, the arrangement is as under.

In the centre of the auditorium there is a raised square platform which is the Rangapitha and above this in it's centre there is another but comparatively smaller square platform which is the Rangasirsa. Since this eight cubits square Rangasirsa is specifically meant for a playhouse of thirtytwo cubits square, it is inevitable that a bigger Rangasirsa will be needed for a larger playhouse.

When the Rangasirsa is eight cubit square, the Rangapitha which is located below it, has to be bigger, though not specified. Twelve cubits square for Rangapitha is reasonable and absolutely appropriate aesthetically for a thirtytwo cubits square theatre.

Considering that few artists will act on it and move around conveniently the word Rangapitha in Sloka-97, should read as 'Rangasirsa' and with the words 'Rangapitha', in Sloka-99, we have a clear conception of the theatre with 8 cubits square space for Rangasirsa in the centre (Please see my view at page 39).

(27) In Sloka 100 Natyasastra states :

"In case of a playhouse of the Vikrsta type (rectangular) it (the plinth of the Mattavarani) should be higher than Rangapitha (lower stage), whereas in a playhouse of the square type it should have a height equal to the Rangapitha".

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26. समुन्नतं समं चैव रङ्गपीठं तु कारयेत् ॥ ९९ ॥

27. विकृष्टेऽप्युन्नतं कार्यं चतुरस्रे समं तथा ।
एवमेतेन विधिना चतुरस्रं गृहं भवेत् ॥ १०० ॥

"These are the rules according to which a square play house is to be built."

- This clearly indicates that once the artist steps out from the dressing room, he is on a level which is either same or lower than that of the lower acting platform. To come to this acting area he has to cross the passage room (Nepathya Gruha) having too doors, one on either side and hence the plinth of this room is also of the same level.

The Rangasirsa (upper stage) located in the centre of the Rangapitha (lower stage) is raised, hence of a different level. The seating arrangements in the auditorium are in tiers and each tier is one cubit higher than the other. The first row is one cubit high from the floor. The spectators enter into the auditorium by one door. To reach the seating places they have to cross-pass the central zone where the acting area is located. To distinguish the acting area, on which the spectators should not tread, there must have been some space around it which was used as spectators passage, though there is no mention of it.

- Hence it can be assumed that Rangasirsa will be of eight cubit square and Rangapitha will be of twelve cubits square. The spectator's passage was of two cubit space around the Rangapitha and the rest eight cubits space around this spectator's passage will be the seating gallery around.

Natyasastra, while describing the specifications for this square type does not mention details as it has done for the rectangular type. For the rectangular playhouse Natyasastra clearly states in Slokas-33 to 35 that :—(Please see No. 6 at page 16.)

'Afterwards he should measure a plot of land sixty four cubits and divide the same into two parts. The part which will be behind him will have to be divided again into two equal halves. Of these halves one should be the Rangasirsa and on the western side of this is the Nepathyagruha'.

Whereas, for the square type of playhouse, Natyasastra writes only thus, in Slokas 88-89 (Please see No. 20 at page 16).

'It should be made perfectly square and divided into requisite parts by holding the string, and it's outer walls should be made with strong bricks very thickly set together.'

- These above two are not the same. They stand for two different things altogether. While 'Vikrsta' (rectangular) theatre caters for one-sided spectators, the 'Caturasra' (square) theatre caters for spectators on all sides. Even allowing concessions to the views of some experts that the pattern a of division might hold good for both, we find many points of differences.

A. Eight cubits square of acting area of Rangasirsa becomes eight cubits by thirty two cubits rectangular.

B. Centrally located (Abhyantara) acting area becomes one side acting area.

C. One door from 'Nepathya Gruha' to 'Rangapitha' cannot be located or justified.

D. Another door on the opposite side of this door (C) cannot be located or justified.

E. Still another door facing the auditorium cannot be located or justified.

F. 'Mattavarani' cannot be located or justified.

G. 'Rangasirsa' which is prescribed to be at a higher level than the Rangapitha as in rectangular playhouse cannot be located or justified.

H. The auditorium in tiers becomes too small (when considering the sight lines of the eight cubits square of acting area) and will hold good for a very small number of spectators. While facing one side of an acting area of 8 cubits, hardly less than 100 people can be accommodated, it can accommodate more than 600 peoples if there are four sided spectators around this 8 cubits square acting area.

I. Why should somebody spend such a lot and go through 'Sastras' to entertain only few, when this theatre is supposed to be for the commoners or the mass in general. The 'Caturasara' (square) type playhouse is a playhouse which is the people's real playhouse and the productions in it are done in the centre, having spectators around. This matches with the traditional form of common 'Jatra of Orissa'. Ninety nine percent of Orissa's histrionic arts (if not all) are meant for presentation in this 'Jatra' style only.

Today, all the traditronal presentations (throughout Orissa) take place in a quickly improvised auditorium exactly of this style only.

I know that throughout India this pattern is also followed for traditional performances but due to hundreds of years of foreign domination, the style of presentation of even traditional historionic arts has now undergone a change.

Adaptations are being done every where and the whole country is influenced by imported styles. And so it is no wonder why we are unable to locate our national Indian classical style of mass theatre.

In the guise of modernity, productions of Indian indigenous histrionic arts are always forced to be adapted to fit into the production methods of the so called modern theatre

with proscenium, screen, wings etc. having spectators on one side only. This has already done enough damage to our art forms and helped to bring down their charms.

While theatre halls of many dimensions are plenty every where in India, they are only made after the imitations of the pattern introduced in the country having only one sided spectators. None followed the Indian traditions of the rectangular theatre either. No halls either Open-sky or with a roof, exist today any where in the country which can cater for a four-sided spectators.

To add to these conditions the influx of cinema and the television has also come on the way, with the demands of one-sided shooting, acting and viewing methods.

Until and unless theatre halls are constructed for the round theatre arts or the common Jatra arts and the cinema and television mediums adapt the methods of filming or televising our indigenous theatre in the manner they do for boxing ring sequences, they will not be able to project the traditional histrionic art forms of the true Indian theatre, in it's correct perspective.

- The rectangular theatre happens to be a very costly theatre in comparision to the square theatre. It also accommodates much less number of spectators than the square. While large rectangular one is prohibited and the small rectangular one is almost good for nothing as the capacity for spectators is very small, the only suitable theatre left in the rectangular variety is the middle-sized one. It belongs to the King.

- Acting involved for one sided spectators is incomplete, superfluous, unnatural and comparatively less artistic than that for the theatre meant for all side spectators.

- **This square theatre (Caturasra) of Natyasastra therefore, is the ideal legitimate national classical style of mass theatre for India.**

PREKSHYAGRUHA LAXSMANAM OF THE TRIANGULAR PLAY-HOUSE

(28) Natyasastra in Slokas 101—102 states :

'Now I shall speak about the characteristics of the triangular playhouse. By the builders, a playhouse with three sides and three corners should be built. The 'Rangapitha' should be made triangular and located in the centre'.

- The word is 'Madhya' and hence, the stage should be centrally located and not otherwise as some experts opine.

(29) In Slokas 102-103 Natyasastra states :

"In one corner of the triangular playhouse there should be a door and a second door should be made at the back of the acting platform"

"Rules regarding walls and pillars prescribed for the square type, will be applicable in case of the triangular type".

- The first door at a corner may be the main entrance. Since it prescribes another door at the back of the acting platform, it is undoubtedly located opposite the corner door and so falls at the centre of the opposite side wall. (Please see illustration at page 45).

- Nothing is said about the Nepathya, Rangasirsa nor 'Mattavarani' which may also mean that these are not required.

These are sometimes felt as essential as the acting area because the artists need a room to dress up or rest a while, and they should also have a passage to move from the dressing room to the acting area during the show.

But......except Mattavarani, the others can be eliminated if the production is like the Dhuduki (or Ghuduki) Nabaranga Nata of Orissa and the like shows. The Daskathia of

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28. त्रयसस्र मण्डपस्यापि संप्रवक्ष्यामि लक्षणम् ।
त्रयस्रं त्रिकोणं कर्त्तव्यं नाट्यवेश्म प्रयोक्तृभिः ॥ १०१ ॥
मध्ये त्रिकोणमेवास्य रङ्गपीठं तु कारयेत् ।

29. द्वारं तेनैव कोणेन कर्त्तव्यं तस्य वेश्मनः ॥ १०२ ॥
द्वितीयं चैव कर्त्तव्यं रङ्गपीठस्य पृष्ठतः ।
विधिर्यश्चतुरस्रस्य भित्तिस्तम्भ समाश्रयः ॥ १०३ ॥

Orissa, the Pala of Orissa, the Dandanata of Orissa and such others donot need a Nepathya Gruha, Nepathya nor Rangasirsa for the entire duration of the play. The artists come in costume, from their place of stay or sometimes dress up and make up in presence of the spectators and remain there till the show is finished.

- It is therefore quite in order that the triangular playhouse specifically holds good for productions such as the Daskathia, Pala, Ghuduki Nata, Dandanata and such others which are very much in vogue in Orissa and other places even now from time immemorial.
- The views expressed by some experts that this triangular theatre also follows the pattern of divisions of the rectangular theatre cannot be accepted because of these following points.

A. The acting platform in the centre cannot be located or justified.

B. The acting platform should also be triangular, which cannot be located or justified.

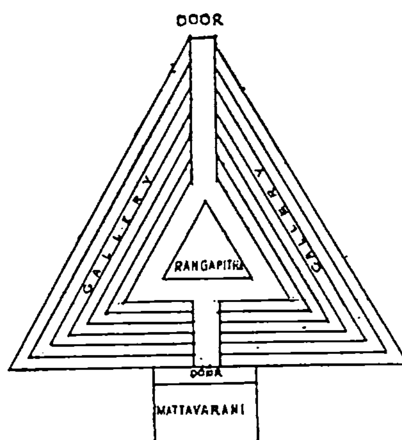
C. One door at one corner of the triangle cannot be located or justified.

D. The second door at the back also cannot be located or justified properly.

E. Since no mention is made about the Nepathya, Mattavarani, nor Rangasirsa as done for the rectangular and square types, and since there are existing traditional performing arts which need none of these, we may not try to make unnecessary additions to the given specifications of the Natyasastra.

F. If followed the pattern of division of the rectangular theatre the auditorium becomes too small thereby accommodating very small number of spectators in this triangular playhouse.

G. It will not be worth the cost or the trouble.



TRIANGULAR PLAYHOUSE
(TRYASRA PREKHSYA GRUHA)

(30) Sloka-104 and the end of chapter two of Natyasastra states :

"These are the rules according to which different playhouses are to be constructed by the learned. Next I shall describe to you the propitiatory in this connection."

"Here ends chapter-II of Bharatas Natyasastra which treats of the characteristics of a playhouse."

SUMMING UP

After studying the Chapter-II of the Natyasastra we form a clear idea about the Prekshyagruha Laxsmanas. They can be tabulated as under :

	A Rectangular (VIKRSTA)	B Square (CATURASRA)	C Triangular (TRYASRA)
	Cubits	Cubits	Cubits
1. Large (Jyestha)	108 x 54 Prohibited	108 x 108	108 x 108
2. Medium (Madhyama)	64 x 32 Specified	64 x 64	64 x 64
3. Small (Avara)	32 x 16	32 x 32 Specified	32 x 32

Jyestha of the Vikrsta type (1A) is directly prohibited because it says so in the Natyasastra, while describing the medium Vikrsta.

Jyestha of the other two types i.e. Caturasra and Tryasra (1B & 1C) cannot be taken as prohibited because in that case there would not have been any necessity of mentioning 'Jyestha' at all in the Natyasastra.

But all types measured in terms of Danda of the given specification can be considered as prohibited because the smallest amongst them the Vikrsta Avara (in Danda) will be bigger than even the Vikrsta Jyestha when measured in cubits because the size will be 32 x 4=128 cubits by 16 x 4=64 cubits. Here the Natyasastra only records the standards of measure prevailing then and it does not necessarily mean that we can have or plan these huge sizes.

30. स तु सर्वः प्रयोक्तव्यस्त्रयस्रस्यापि प्रयोक्तृभिः ।
एवमेतेन विधिना कार्यं नाट्यगृहं बुधैः ॥ १०४ ॥
अत ऊर्ध्वं प्रवक्ष्यामि पूजामेषां यथाविधिः ।
इति श्री भारतीये नाट्यशास्त्रे प्रेक्षागृह-
लक्षणं नाम द्वितीयोऽध्याय: ।

For example the medium rectangular can either be taken or measured as 64 cubits by 32 cubits or 16 Dandas by 8 Dandas (because a Danda is equal to 4 cubits) only.

Rectangular :

While prohibiting the large rectangular, Natyasastra has specified measurements and all other requirements of the medium rectangular but has not said anything about the small rectangular.

The size of small rectangular playhouse would be thirty two cubits by sixteen cubits. Following the principles of division shown for medium rectangular we find that the Ranga-pitha and the Rangasirsa becomes 8 cubits by 16 cubits each and the Rangamandala will be 16 cubits by 16 cubits.

Hence the Vikrsta Avara type is also feasible although it will accommodate only a very small number of spectators.

It can therefore be concluded that amongst the three varieties both the medium rectangular and the small rectangular theatres are practicable.

Square :

Natyasastra has indicated the measurements of the smallest type of square playhouse which is 32 cubits by 32 cubits. I have already discussed vividly the type or style of play-house it should be or it was. Even a similar playhouse of Jyestha type with an area of 108 cubits by 108 cubits is acceptable because the spectators are all around and no place in the auditorium is more than the prohibited distance i.e. 64 cubits from the centre as indicated in the Natyasastra while describing the rectangular playhouse.

Hence it can be concluded that all the three types of square playhouses are accepta-ble as per the Natyasastra.

Triangular :

Natyasastra says 'triangular' but does not tell us the measurements as it has done for the other two. This means we do not know whether it meant large, medium or small.

As in the case of square type, since the acting area is in the centre, it will be seen that even the largest triangular playhouse is acceptable because no place in the auditorium is more than the prohibited distance i.e. 64 cubits from the centre.

Hence it can be concluded that all types of triangular playhouses are acceptable as per the Natyasastra.

Thus it gives the total of only eight types of playhouses.

1.	The Medium Rectangular (Madhyama Vikrsta)	64 × 32 cubits.
2.	The Small Rectangular (Avara Vikrsta)	32 × 16 cubits.
3.	The Large Square (Jyestha-Caturasra)	108 × 108 cubits.
4.	The Medium Square (Madhyama-Caturasra)	64 × 64 cubits.
5.	The Small Square (Avara Caturasra)	32 × 32 cubits
6.	The Large Triangular (Jyestha Tryasra)	108 × 108 cubits.
7.	The Medium Triangular Madhyama Tryasra)	64 × 64 cubits.
8	The Small Triangular (Avara Tryasra)	32 × 32 cubits.

THE MATTAVARANI

RECTANGULAR THEATRE : (Mattavarani)

We know that the Mattavarani is the side room or rooms where admission is prohibited and it is projected out of the prescribed area. The Middle Rectangular theatre has been prescribed to have one on each side of the Rangapitha Each Mattavarani is to have four pillars.

Although Natyasastra does not prescribe any for the Rangasirsa we have got it at the Rani Gumpha theatre and although the measurements of these do not match either for the size or for the number of the pillars on them with those of the Rangapitha they are there and call them in any name, they are nothing but side rooms projecting out of the prescribed area, hence Mattavarani. (Please see details at No. 8, page 18 and 19).

SQUARE THEATRE : (Mattavarani)

In case of square theatre the Mattavarani is also located outside the specified area but not by the side of the Rangapitha. Although Natyasastra prescribes four pillars as that of the Rectangular type, it further states about the plinth which should be of equal or lower level than that of it's Rangapitha. I have already explained this before. (Please see No. 25 at page 39 and No. 27 at page 40).

TRIANGULAR THEATRE : (Mattavarani)

For the Triangular theatre Natyasastra has not prescribed any Mattavarani hence this may not be considered as a must to follow the prescribed rules laid for Vikrsta or Caturasra types.

Realising it's utilities, we admit its existence. (Please see No. 29 at page 44 and illustration at page 45).

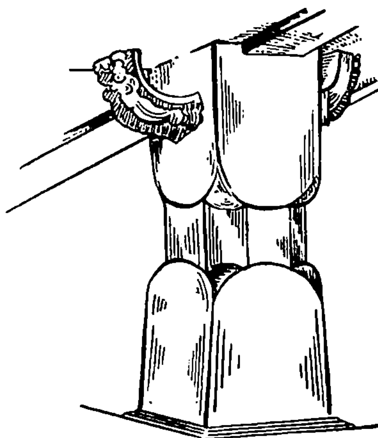
PILLARS AND NAGADANTAMS

All the pillars of the Nepathya Gruha of Rectangular theatre had a pair of Nagadantams (brackets) at the capital. One of these brackets is inwards and the other outwards. This brings us a series of double brackets from one end to the other, on pillars of the Nepathya Gruhas of Rangasirsa of Rectangular theatre. Pillars of the Nepathya Gruha of Rangapitha of Rectangular theatre have one Nagadantam each at the capital on the front side only.

There is no evidence that the pillars of the Mattavaranis of Rangapitha (both right side and left side) had any Nagadantam at their capitals, in the Ranigumpha theatre.

These are either completely damaged or there was some other arrangement to serve their functions.

While on the pilasters of the right Mattavarani of Rangasirsa of Ranigumpha theatre the sockets are visible, there is no Nagadantam on the pillar of the left Mattavarani of Rangasirsa of Ranigumpha theatre.



Pillar with a pair of Nagadantams at the capital.

Rod or Dharana (wooden beam) used to be passed through these in a row and curtains and drapery used to be hung on them forming a partition. Thus behind this partition of the Nepathya Gruha we have separate rooms with verandah and bench .

NEPATHYA GRUHA

RECTANGULAR THEATRE : (Nepathya Gruha)

Natyasastra prescribes Nepathya Gruha at the back side (western side) of the Rangasirsa and we have got it at the Ranigumpha theatre, as required. Although no specifications have been stated as regards the size, height or number of pillars etc., we find a row of 4 rooms (8 openings) and 11 pillars (including pilasters) in front of these, throughout the breadth of the western portion of the prescribed area. They form the Nepathya Gruhas of the Rangasirsa.

Although Natyasastra has not prescribed any Nepathya Gruha for the Rangapitha, the Ranigumpha theatre does have it. A row of 4 rooms (8 openings) with 8 pillars (including pilasters) in front of these (pillars are no more there) form the Nepathya Gruha of Rangapitha. The entire block with 4 rooms and 8 pillars (including pilasters) do not form any extra area because these are located just under the Rangasirsa hence form a part of the area of the Rangasirsa and thereby outside the area of the Rangapitha.

Natyasastra describes two doors for the Nepathya Gruha of the Rangasirsa. These two doors were not located on the same direct axis of the landings of the Sad-Darukas, but were located between the first two pillars and last two pillars of the Nepathya Gruha of the Rangasirsa.

84

All the pillars in front of the Nepathya Gruha of Rangasirsa had a pair of Nagadantams (brackets) at the capital.

Two rows of wooden beams used to pass through these brackets on which the curtains hung, forming complete back drops.

The frontages of the Nepathya Gruhas were also being decorated with flowers, garlands etc.as on the Mattavaranis, during the days of performances. And behind the curtains we have a row of separate rooms, a narrow but long verandah and a full length bench. It is assumed that two doors for the Nepathya Gruha of Rangapitha were located nearer the bases of the Sad-Darukas or the staircases.

SQUARE THEATRE (Nepathya Gruha)

The Nepathya Gruha in the square theatre forms a part of the prescribed area as against the Mattavarani which is the side room projecting out of the prescribed area.

As per the details given at No. 23 page 38 and 39 the Nepathya of square theatre falls between the Mattavarani and the Rangapitha in between the spectators gallery. This room

only a passage room for the artists where they wait till their roles come and noises, forms disturbances, callings and the like are done in this passage room just as in the rectangular theatre.

The word "Nepathya" (passage) justifies its' meaning in the case of only the square theatre since it really falls on the way of the artists from the dressing room to the acting area.

It is the square theatre which is the oldest form of theatre evolved out of natural necessities of peoples.

In a rectangular theatre, where the actings involved are mainly one-sided, series of caves in the background surely helps in the acoustics, as found in the Ranigumpha theatre.

It could be that while evolving the design for an intimate type of rectangular theatre as a sort of novetly, the rooms were introduced to serve multipurpose i.e. euphony, artists waiting as well as a background. These rooms, although really do not form the Nepathya or passage, bore the name perhaps from the previous use of the term from the square theatre.

TRIANGULAR THEATRE (Nepathya Gruha)

Natyasastra has not prescribed any Nepathya Gruha for this theatre and I have also discussed that this Nepathya Gruha is not a necessity for many forms of histrionic arts. But then the entry or exit passage itself is the Nepathya though not a room or Gruha.

MATTAVARANI AND NEPATHYA GRUHA

It is in the Mattavarani the artists do their dressing, make-up or retire. Once they come out they go to the Nepathya Gruha and wait until their roles come.

In the rectangular theatre both Mattavaranis and Nepathya Gruhas are rooms complete with verandah, bench and pillars. Only the number of pillars and number of rooms vary. Hence Nepathya Gruhas of the rectangular theatre could also be used as dressing or retiring rooms.

Except Nepathya Gruha of Rangasirsa of rectangular theatre, Nepathya Gruhas always form a part of the prescribed area. The Mattavaranis are always located at the sides projecting out of the prescribed area.

Nepathya Gruhas of rectangular theatre are regular apartments consisting of number of rooms. These could be used as back grounds in a play. But in square theatres they are just the passage rooms, with doors on both sides.

RANGAPITHA

The Rangapitha in all the theatres is a part of the acting area. While the Rangapitha of the rectangular theatre is located on one side of the auditorium facing spectators on one side, the Rangapithas of the square theatre and triangular theatre face all side spectators (four sides in square and three sides in triangular).

Both in rectangular and square theatres the Rangapithas are the lower acting areas whereas in triangular theatre this is the only acting area because there is no mention of Rangasirsa prescribed for the triangular theatre. The plinth of the Rangapitha in rectangular theatre is lower than that of it's Mattavarani, but in the square theatre this is either of the same level or can also be higher if required (as explained in 25 and 26 at pages 39 and 40).

RANGASIRSA

The Rangasirsa in both the square theatre and rectangular theatre is the upper stage forming the main acting area.

In both theatres the plinth of Rangasirsa is higher than the plinth of Rangapitha.

While in the rectangular theatre the Rangasirsa is located behind the Rangapitha, it is located in the centre of the Rangapitha in the square theatre.

In rectangular theatre the area of the Rangasirsa is equal to the area of the Rangapitha. In square theatre it is less than the area of the Rangapitha.

While in square theatre the plinth of Rangasirsa is little higher than the plinth of the Rangapitha which enables artists to step on easily on to that, in case of middle rectangular theatre the Rangasirsa is ten feet higher than the plinth of the Rangapitha, thereby necessiating the use of staircases on both sides, the Sad-Darukas.

SAD-DARUKA

These are the stair-cases used for connecting the Rangapitha and Rangasirsa which are located in two different levels in the rectangular theatre. The Rangasirsa is ten feet high up than the Rangapitha in the middle rectangular theatre as established from the Ranigumpha theatre.

These Sad-Darukas are made of six pieces of wood, two at the sides and four in the middle.

In Ranigumpha theatre, the special landings on which the sad Darukas rested on the Rangasirsa are about four feet lower than the floor of the Rangasirsa which leaves an ascent of six feet only. Leaving equal space from the foot and the top of the staircase, we find four steps are just necessary to move up and down. Hence four wooden steps were used in these Sad-Darukas.

After going up on the Sad-Daruka the artists walk straight on the sides of the Rangasirsa to reach the locations of the doors of the Nepathya Gruha of Rangasirsa of Renigumpha theatre.

DOORS

RECTANGULAR THEATRE (Doors)

For the Nepathya Gruha of the Rangasirsa of the rectangular theatre, two doors have beed prescribed.

For the Nepathya Gruha of the Rangapitha, we can accept two doors in the same way and although no doors have ben prescribed for Mattavarani, we can accept one door for each.

Natyasastra mentions 'Niryuhas' which are doors and the doors can be entry or exit doors for spectators, separate door for artists and materials, separate doors for guests and other V. I. Ps. located at different places of the play house.

SQUARE THEATRE (Doors)

There are three doors prescribed for the small square theatre and I have specified the locations of these doors. (please see 23 at page 38 and drawing at page 37).

TRIANGULAR-THEATRE (Doors)

There are only two doors prescribed for the triangular theatre, the locations of which I have already specified (Please see 29 at page 44 and drawing at page 45).

WINDOWS

GABAKHSYAM-(VATAYANAM)

While no particular locations have been specified for windows in the playhouse, the mention of mechanised latticed windows (Yantrajala Gabakhsyam) in the medium rectangular theatre has been made.

While describing this playhouse, that it should be like a mountain cavern with two floors, Natyasastra; writes that it should also have small windows and be free from wind in order to have good acoustic quality, I assume thatmost of these windows were located high-up on the walls of the auditorium, which could be shut by operating strings when desired.

This arrangement of small windows high-up around the walls would also hold good for square and triangular playhouses.

BY THE WAY ....

Natyasastra of Bharata Muni Prescribed only three types of plots of land over which playhouses are to be constructed. They are the vikrsta (Rectangular), Caturasra (square) and the Tryasra (Triangular).

'Silpasastra', another very ancient and a great treatise which deals with construction houses and temples etc. gives the description of sixteen types of plots of land available for any construction purposes. Silpasastra also predicts the fate to follow when you erect something on the particular type of plot of land chosen by you. *2

The following table gives the nature of fate to follow when you erect something on these sixteen types of plots according to the Silpasastra.

Nos.	Names	English	Results	English
1.	Ayatam	Rectangular	Sidhyatesarvam	All desires fulfilled
2.	Caturasram	Square	Dhanagamah	Wealth increase.
3.	Chhatram	Umbrella shape	Pritivivardhim	Good-will increase
4.	Bhadrasanam	Rotund	Krutarthinah	Success.
5.	Chakram	Hexagonal	Daridra rogam	Poverty-sickness.
6.	Vishamavahu	Uneven	Shokam	Sorrows
7.	Trikonam	Triangular	Raj-bhiti	Fear of king.
8.	Sakatakrutim	Cart-shape	Dhanakhsyaya	Loss of wealth.
9.	Dandam	Rod-shape	Chowra nasyanti	Liquidation of theft.
10.	Pranavam	Cleaved	Netranasanam	Loss of eyes.
11.	Sumuartikam	Embodied	Mriyate bharya	Death of wife.
12.	Guhadam	Cave	Sukha nasanam	Loss of happiness.
13.	Vyajanam	Fantype	Vittanasanam	Loss of wealth.
14.	Kurmakam	Tortoise-shape	Dhanalabham	Gain of wealth.
15.	Dhanurakaram	Bow-shape	Chourabhayam	Fear of theft.
16.	Suryam	Sun-shape	Daridrata	Poverty.

*1 आयतं चतुरस्त्रं च छत्रं भद्रासनं तथा ।
चक्रं विषमबाहुः स्यात्त्रिकोणं शकटाकृतिम् ॥
दण्डं च प्रणवं मूर्त्तं गृहदं व्यजनं तथा ।
चूर्मकं धनुराकारं सूर्य्यकंरेति षोड़शः ॥

*2 आयते सिध्यते सर्वं चतुरस्त्रे धनागमः ।
छत्रे प्रीतिविवर्द्धिं च भद्रासने कृतार्थिनः ॥
चक्रे दरिद्र रोगं च शोकं विषमबाहुके ।
राजाभित्तिस्त्रिकोणेस्यात् शकटे च धनक्षयः ॥
चौरा नश्यन्ति दण्डेन प्रणवे नेत्रनाशनम् ।
सुमूर्त्तौ म्रियते भार्य्या गृहदे सुखनाशनम् ॥
व्यजनेवित्तनाशं च धनलाभं च कच्छपे ।
चापे चौरभयं विद्या भास्करे च दरिद्रता ॥

Out of the sixteen types of plots, Bharata Muni prescribed only three types and according to the Silpasastra we find that they bring forth the following results.

1.	Rectangular :	All desires fulfilled...	Good
2.	Square :	wealth increase......... ...	Good
3.	Triangular :	Fear of king.................	Not bad

Fate resulting out of construction of a playhouse on a tringular plot a land is "not bad" because "fear of king" is neither a vice nor a misfortune in comparison to loss of wealth, loss of eyesight, death of wife, loss of happiness, fear of theft, sorrow etc.

We also know that the Avara of the smallest Size of Plot prescribed for playhouse is meant for the rest of the people (see 3 at page 15). While Jyestha or large one is for Gods, the Madhyama or the middle-sized one is meant for the kings.

When it is for the Gods fear of king or any fear for that matter is naturally not involved and when it is meanf for the king, it is the kings own creation, and hence fear of self is not affected.

And then we know that to live or flourish in a kingdom, the king's patronisation is the main soorce of devlopment of one's culture. And so, to have fear of king is rather to mean loyality which in otherwords would ensure better subsidies and encouragements to the institution.

So triangular theatre is not bad and hence also good.

One thing which occurs to mind is that excluding the above three, there are the other following types which also bring good results.

1.	Chhatram	Good will increase
2.	Bhadrasanam	Success.
3.	Kumakam	Gain of wealth.
4.	Dandam	Liquidation of theft.

Why did Bharata Muni not prescribe these types of playhouses in his text ?

Although we do not find them in the text of the Natyasastra we have them at the site around the Ranigumpha theatre of Udayagiri. While the Apsidal catara atop Udayagiri is of the shape of 'Kurmakam', the sites of Tatwa Gumpha No. 1 and No. 2 resemble to be of 'Dandam' and 'Bhadrasansam' respectively and the Patalika Catara is of the 'Chhatram' variety meant for developing good-will amongst his subjects.

Whatever the size or shape of the plot it may be, the demands of the presentation of all histonic arts need only four types of playhouses and these can be classified as under :

1. Playhouses meant for one side spectators arrangements.
2. Playhouses meant for two sides spectators arrangements.
3. Playhouses meant for three sides spectators arrangements.
4. Playhouses meant for four or all sides spectators arrangements.

While sizes of the theatre would vary according to the demands on the capacity of the auditorium desired, the stage designs would also vary according to the demands of the type of programmes to be enacted on them as well as number of artists expected to appear on stage at a time.

As for example, a solo dance meant for entertaining fifty people would look ridiculous if presented in a theatre meant for one thousand spectators. Similarly engaging a full theatre regularly for conducting rehearsals is also a waste because while the entire acting area is required in a rehearsal, the entire auditorium remains unutilised.

Kharavela an exponent of all theatre-arts himself, had known all these practicalities and so he built up all types of theatre around and atop his favourite site, the Khandgiri and Udayagiri hills.

And accordingly some of the structures cut in caves around these hills, if not all, like the Ananta Gumpha, Tatwa Gumphas, Ganesh Gumpha etc., were the Mattavaranis or the side rooms of no admission, each belonging to a Catara or Jathara or Jatra —the Theatre.

While the Patalika Catara juxtaposed between two hills at the base, the Apsidal Catara atop and Ganesh Gumpha, Ranigumpha at different levels in Udayagiri and the Ananta Gumpha, Tatwa Gumpha, No. 1 and No. 2 at different heights of Khandgiri, we have a Theatre-complex at the site consisting of a chain of theatres of different sizes and types located at distinctly different levels—different levels for not causing disturbance of one to the other.

With Dapa - Nata - Gita - Vadita -Usava, Samaja, taking place simultaneously in every theatre...... .... well..... .. ..one can imagine the super master mind that created this Jatra Samyukta (Theatre-complex) of Gandhava Veda Budho Maha Meghavahana Kalingadhipati Aira Sri Kharavela.

'Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti'

The End

CORRIGENDUM

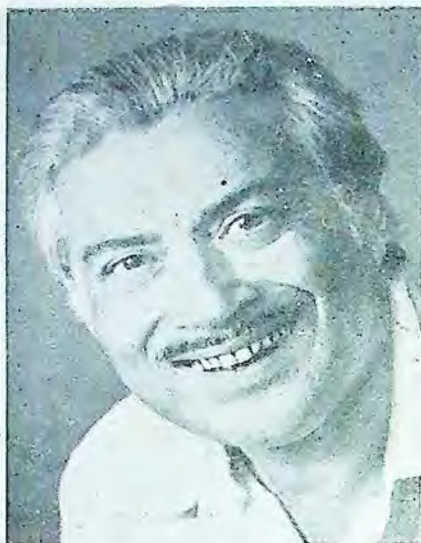
Page	Line	Word	To read
Author's note	7	page ii	page li
do	11	wites	writes
6	27	to an	to mean
7	23	a wait	await
7	24	repeatation	repetition
7	29	patbhare	pabhare
10	7	convinces	convince
24	3	eas	east
25	16	desian	design
29	1	tne	the
42	17	Caturasara	Caturasra
42	21	traditronal	traditional
45	2	nor	or
45	16	nor	or
51	1	only	forms only
51	2	forms disturbances	disturbances
51	12	novetly	novelty
14	fn. 2	त्रयस्त्रश्चैव	त्रयस्त्रश्चैव
14	fn. 2	तथाऽवरम्	तथावरम्
15	fn. 2	मन्त्यानां	मत्यानां
16	fn. 4	पश्चिमेस्थ	पशिमस्थे
24	fn. 2	श्फटिकं	स्फटिकं
24	fn. 3	प्रवालभुन्तरे	प्रवालमुत्तरे
34	fn. 1	प्रयोक्तिभिः	प्रयोक्तृभिः
38	fn. 3	कार्य्यं	कार्य्यं
38	fn.10	स्तजक्षै	स्तजज्ञै
38	fn.11	ध्वारितासते	धारितास्ते

46 the measurements of "Large Square" should be 108 × 108 cubits instead of 108 × 102.

(Diacritical marks not indicated)

Main books referred :—

* Indian Theatre — Dr. C. B. Gupta
* History of Orissa — Dr. H. K. Mahtab
* History of the Art of Orissa — Mr. Charles Fabri
* Natya Sastra (English) — Dr. M. M. Ghosh
* Natya Sâstra (Hindi) — Dr. Raghuvansh
  Natya Sastra (Oriya) — Pandit B. Acharya
* Sanskrit Drama — Mr. A. B Keith
  Shri Kharavela — Shri K. N. Mohapatra
* Silpa-Sastra — Shri B. Moharana
  The Hatigumpha Inscription of Kharavela .. — Dr. Shashikant



Dhiren Dash
Born 1927, Angul, Orissa.

A diploma-holder in dramatic arts from the Bombay Natya Academi as a student of Mr. Herbert Marshall, Shri Dash besides being an actor, director, commentator and production designer of eminence, is, an original thinker, writer, and trend-setter in the field of histrionic arts in the country.

Shri Dash was the pioneering spirit to initiate the revival of Odissi Dance and Chhau Dance of Mayurbhanj in 1948. He is responsible for the reformation, re-orientation and revival of Orissa's age-old traditional Jatra and the memory of the great poet-dramatist, the late Ganakavi Baishnaba Pani. He is also responsible for the popularisation of open-air shows in Orissa by demonstrating various novel stage productions.

A man of versatile genious and dedicated interests, Shri Dash was a film journalist, a news-correspondent and the managing editor of 'Kumkum', Bombay. He is a regular contributor of articles to various journals. His historical verse-drama 'Bali Jatra' is specially written in a style meant to be enacted on three separate stages simultaneously in view.

He is a member of the General Council of Central Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi as a nominee of Orissa State. He was a member of the General Council of Central Lalit Kala Akademi as a nominee of Central Sangeet Natak Akademi. At present he is the Special Officer of Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi. He is also the Orissa State Liaison Officer for Inter-State Exchange of Cultural Troupes.